

GEOGRAPHIES OF POSTGRADUATE ACADEMIC EXCLUSIONS AT A SOUTH AFRICAN UNIVERSITY: A NARRATIVE INQUIRY

by

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SUPERVISOR'S STATEMENT

This research has been submitted with/without my approval.

Professor Pholoho Morojele

Date

DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

I, Renita Maharaj, declare that this dissertation entitled:

The geographies of postgraduate academic exclusions at a South African university: A narrative inquiry is my own work and that all sources used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references and citations. This dissertation has not been submitted before for any degree or examination at any other university.

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this inquiry was to examine postgraduate academic exclusions in the School of Education at a University in Kwa-Zulu Natal. This study was guided by Children's Geographies and New Sociology of Childhood Studies as its theoretical framework. Although this theory has largely been used on research specifically related to children (Barker, J. & Weller, S. 2003), its principles have been creatively applied in this study, in a manner that provides deeper insights in understanding dynamics of academic exclusions in a higher education institution. The theoretical framework helped the study to understand location of postgraduate students in the exclusionary processes of the university (Barker & Weller, 2003). The new sociology of childhood studies (Frones, Jenks & Qvortrup, 2000) helped the study to document the creative and innovative ways through which the academically excluded postgraduate students engaged with their circumstances in order to enhance their chances of being academically included and thus complete their studies.

The data generation method adopted standardized, open-ended interviews used in an inquiry process from a purposive sample of six participants (that is, three females and three males). The data generation was separated into three main themes according to which the students narrated their personal stories. The main themes that directed the inquiry were stories that postgraduate students told about their academic exclusion experiences; factors that led to their academic exclusion; and how they navigate and negotiate academic exclusion. The study adopted an interpretivist paradigm which was used to analyse the data.

The findings, which emerged, provide an understanding of the intervening circumstances, which have led to the participant's academic exclusion and the strategies employed by the participants to achieve success with their studies. The study concludes with a discussion regarding the implications and recommendations, which can be considered and perhaps applied by academic institutions to assist them in understanding the phenomenon of postgraduate academic exclusions so that these institutions can develop strategies in addressing postgraduate academic exclusions.

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CHAPTER ONE

1 CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

South Africa is comparatively lagging behind in PhD production with other countries, which is evident through non or late completion of PhD graduate studies (CHE, 2009; Lovitts, 2001). It is estimated that around 45% of doctoral students enrolled in PhD programmes in various schools of Education never complete their studies and 29% exit during the first two years of their studies (CHE, 2009). Statistics between 2000 and 2007 indicate that South Africa ranks as one of the lowest PhD producing countries worldwide (Mouton, 2007). Educational authorities, universities and other stakeholders should be concerned with the poor production of PhD graduates. It is against this background that this study set out to examine the geographies of postgraduate academic exclusion at a South African university. The study was based on the narratives of six students (the participants) at a South African university. The purpose of the study was to examine the experiences of academically excluded postgraduate students. The objective of the study was to examine the experiences of academically excluded postgraduate students, through the use of semi-structured, individual interviews, to develop an understanding of students' experiences of postgraduate academic exclusion which has motivated this particular study.

In this chapter, I commence with a discussion of the background to this study, the problem statement, the rationale and objectives of the study, including key research questions that guided the study. I then proceed with addressing the three key contextual dynamics of the study, namely the geographical, socio-economic and educational contexts of the study. The chapter also addresses the significance of the study, abbreviations used in the study, and a conclusion of the outline of the entire dissertation.

1.2 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Students enrolled in postgraduate programmes experience many challenges before they complete their studies successfully. At the doctoral level, even the brightest students experience difficulty in their studies and fail to complete the process (CHE, 2010). The purpose of the study was to examine the intervening circumstances, which result in students becoming academically excluded from the School of Education at a South African university. There are many stakeholders affected by students who fail at the postgraduate level, the first being students who become psychologically and emotionally affected because of the enormous sacrifices encountered, the second being supervisors, because it does not augur well for a supervisor to produce a failed student, subsequently it leads to the questioning of the credibility of the supervisor.

Further, the university as a stakeholder may lose a considerable amount of funding from loss of subsidy income. Employers might lose the opportunity to recruit a highly qualified candidate for specialized jobs and the country will not benefit. Producing postgraduate

students in a developing country such as South Africa addresses a significant obstacle to economic growth because postgraduate studies develop innovation, which closes the skills gap existing in modern industrialized societies (Mouton 2001).

1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT

In many South African universities, there is a very high attrition rate resulting in a very low throughput rate of students, successfully completing their qualifications on time (CHE, 2010). This limits the ability of the university to increase the number of postgraduate students, which is an alarming problem educational authorities are struggling to address in a country, which is lagging behind in its production of postgraduate students in comparison to the rest of the world. A major contributor seems to be the large percentage of students becoming victims of academic exclusion.

1.4 RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

My experiences as a postgraduate administrator during the past five years motivated my desire to pursue a study, which would lead me to understand academic exclusion, particularly at the postgraduate level in greater depth. The reason for this inquiry was due to the numerous cases of academic exclusions that I observed in my field of work and which is a problem worsening each year. At every examination board I have attended, more and more students are served with slow progress warnings and academic exclusion notices. It is this professional experience that motivated me to acquire a deeper

understanding of exclusion in order to explore strategies, which can be used to curb this enormous challenge and make postgraduate studies more inclusive.

At present, we do not have much understanding regarding the phenomenon of inclusion in higher education because much of the debates and the focus of policy have been about inclusion at the schooling level. The negligence of the higher education and postgraduate sector in regard to issues of inclusion means that the students at these institutions are at higher risk of not achieving their academic and educational goals. There is a need to broaden the focus on inclusive education in higher education institutions where students are generally trained for professional employment. Meaningful and sustainable inclusion at higher educational institutions could accelerate the transformation of the broader South African society. Therefore, it is necessary to understand the factors that contribute to postgraduate students' being excluded in higher education institutions. Such understanding could help in devising strategies aimed at improving quality of educational delivery, supervision support and throughput rate in order to address the challenge of postgraduate academic exclusions in higher education institutions.

Postgraduate education is confronted with enormous challenges (Herman, 2011). South Africa in recent years has experienced a 'brain drain', which has resulted in a shortage of critical skills in the country. In response to the "brain drain", universities have committed themselves to increasing their postgraduate student enrolments to meet the envisaged targets of the country, which is lagging behind in postgraduate production in comparison to other countries.

1.5 THE OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of the study was to engage academically excluded students to narrate their experiences of being academically excluded. The objective of the study was to examine participant's experiences of postgraduate academic exclusions in the School of Education at a South African university. The study aimed to examine factors that contributed to academic exclusion and how students negotiate and navigate the process of being academically excluded.

1.5.1 The research questions

The study was informed by the following key research questions:

1. What stories do postgraduate students tell about their experiences of academic exclusions in one school within the University of KwaZulu-Natal?
2. What are the factors that contribute to academic exclusions in one school within the University of KwaZulu-Natal?
3. How do postgraduate students navigate and negotiate the process when they become academically excluded in this context?

These research questions formed the basis of the study. They led to the development of a structured interview schedule, which was used to elicit responses from the participants according to the themes developed by the key research questions. The study employed

the narrative inquiry, which involved the participatory research method, as discussed below.

1.6 CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

The study was conducted in the School of Education at the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal, which positions itself as the Premier University of African Scholarship. The participants were selected from the School of Education from the Edgewood and Pietermaritzburg campuses. There are roughly 7000 students enrolled at Edgewood campus, most of whom are pursuing their undergraduate pre-service Bachelor of Education teacher training qualification. About a quarter of the student population consists of Masters and PhD students, who are mainly studying part-time because they are employed as teachers or in other capacities in the Education Department. A small contingent consists of international students, who are mainly enrolled as full-time students. The majority of students in the postgraduate programmes are black South Africans, who range from previously disadvantaged and impoverished backgrounds. Most of the participants in the programmes were schooled during the apartheid era under the political dispensation prior to 1994. The selected campus for this study is located in a well-developed area, in close proximity to all modes of transport, which is accessible to students from far and wide. Residences are also available to students who wish to reside on campus. The students reside in urban areas around the university. The students who reside on campus do not experience challenges in terms of transport and financial expenses experienced by participants who live, in some cases, more than 220km from the campus.

The Ministry of Education has established a sound legislative policy framework for educational transformation, which included the following. The South African Constitution (1996) has made it mandatory for education to be transformed and democratised in line with the values of dignity, equality, human rights and freedoms, non-racism and non-sexism. The constitution makes provision for the right of everyone to basic education, including adult basic education. The framework for an inclusive education system is outlined in *Education White Paper 6: Special Needs Education: Building an Inclusive Education and Training System* (Department of Education 2001). The scope of this policy is comprehensive as it attempts to address the diverse needs of all learners who experience barriers to learning. The main goal of White Paper 6 is to grant access to all learners to mainstream education. White Paper 6 establishes the foundation for inclusion in education. Inclusion has gained more importance in favour of human rights. Inclusion at higher education institutions could be improved by understanding and addressing the factors that contribute to exclusion. The term exclusion has a negative connotation and it is surprising to note that since 1994, South African higher educational institutions are still plagued with academic exclusions.

1.7 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of the study is to examine the impact of postgraduate academic exclusion in academic institutions. Currently, postgraduate academic exclusion poses a challenge because it inhibits postgraduate production. In a country such as South Africa,

postgraduate academic exclusion is a serious problem which has to be addressed because it is inhibiting postgraduate academic production. The increasing number of academically excluded students places a major financial strain on institutions because it impacts funding and restricts access to new enrolments because students currently on the system may take longer to complete their studies than anticipated.

1.8 ABBREVIATIONS OF TERMS

CHE	Council on Higher Education
DHET	Department of Higher Education and Training
DoE	Department of Education
SAQA	South African Qualifications Authority
UKZN	University of KwaZulu Natal

1.9 STRUCTURE OF THE DISSERTATION

This dissertation is structured as follows:

Chapter one provides a comprehensive outline of the aims and rationale of the study. It also presents background information to the study as well as the significance of the study.

Chapter two provides a review of related local and global research on academic exclusions. The literature review tackles the issue of postgraduate academic exclusion

by focusing on the factors that contribute to postgraduate academic exclusion. Chapter two also presents the theoretical framework for the study.

Chapter three sets out the research designs and methods employed in this study. This study is a qualitative study of postgraduate student experiences of academic exclusion at the School of Education at a South African university.

Chapter four presents the findings of the study. The findings are discussed under different themes, which emerged from the collected data. Some of the themes included their understanding of postgraduate academic exclusion, the factors that led to them being academically excluded and how they navigate and negotiate the exclusionary dynamics.

Chapter five provides a summary by drawing on the findings and presenting the implications of the study. The data is reviewed and recommendations are made.

CHAPTER TWO

2 GEOGRAPHIES OF POSTGRADUATE ACADEMIC EXCLUSION AT A SOUTH AFRICAN UNIVERSITY

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study was to examine the geographies of postgraduate academic exclusion at a South African university. This chapter examines and discusses the literature on postgraduate academic exclusion and the phenomenon of students' experiences of being academically excluded at a higher education institution. The chapter is structured in the following style. Firstly, the chapter presents the various forms and types of academic exclusion. Secondly, it discusses the various factors affecting academic exclusion in higher education. It then discusses the support mechanisms for academic exclusion in higher education. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the theoretical framework which guided this study. The study was influenced by a theoretical framework of Children's Geographies, the context of my study focuses on social justice issues pertaining to the Children's Geographies trajectory. The common thread in Children's Geographies and postgraduate geographies is characterized by social justice and human rights issues. Academic exclusion at the postgraduate level is also a social justice and human rights issue because it affects a person's right to furthering their education and affects their dignity.

2.2 THE ROLE OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN A SOUTH AFRICAN CONTEXT

In South Africa, the new State policies have been developed within the new democratic era. The government policies are aimed at the establishment of an inclusive education system to provide quality and equitable education for students at school and tertiary level. The *Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Act No. 108 of 1996* (Republic of South Africa 1996) includes the Bill of Rights which stipulates that everyone has a right to basic education. It has been recognized internationally that South Africa has a very good Constitution. Education promotes social development and uplifts people. Education plays a pivotal role in transforming society. Education is considered in many parts of the world to be the most empowering mechanism that can change the lives of the poor and can benefit a country's economy.

According to Akoojee (2007), education is perceived to be contributory in achieving transformational goals. South Africa is considered to be a very unequal country where poverty and unemployment are endemic, therefore education should be made accessible to all citizens to assist transformational goals. *Education White Paper 6: Special Needs Education: Building an Inclusive Education and Training System* establishes the framework for an inclusive education system (Department of Education, 2001). The broad scope of this policy attempts to address the diverse needs of all learners who encounter barriers to learning. White Paper 6 establishes a pillar for inclusion in education by enabling all learners to gain access to mainstream education. The purpose of this study seeks to examine the geographies of postgraduate academic exclusion at a South African

university. The study focuses on improving our understanding of inclusion and exclusion and on providing useful insights into the means to address factors that contribute to exclusion within these contexts. Exclusion can be described as the process that prevents students from gaining access to educational opportunities. One of the purposes of higher education is to develop students intellectually.

Haigh and Clifford (2011) affirm that the purpose and goal of higher education extends to the development of students' moral values and core competencies. Higher education institutions are charged with the responsibility of transforming students into citizens who will protect the world by fulfilling their personal, social and environmental obligations. Hansen (2011) concedes with Haigh and Clifford (2011) by emphasizing that the goals of higher education should focus on developing moral judgment, critical thinking, and scientific and global awareness in students to organize them to function in a democratic, civilized, and global society. Sullivan (2011) maintains that the ultimate goal and purpose of higher education is to equip students' complex knowledge, capacity in skilful practices, and a commitment to the purposes espoused by their community. It is evident from the foregoing that higher education in South Africa has a social and moral responsibility to transform society, as proposed by Sullivan (2011).

Bok (2013) asserts that higher education institutions are required to "supply the knowledge and ideas that create new industries, protect us from disease, preserve and enrich our culture, and inform us about our history, our environment, our society, and ourselves". McArthur (2011) similarly argues that higher education prepares students for

the working world in ways that contribute to both the general welfare and to an enhanced and more just society for everyone. Rowland (2002) states that the prime purpose of higher education is to create wealth for a global economy, apart from developing discipline specific competence and generic skills and personal dispositions (such as mood, nature and character among students).

The university is entrusted to serve the individual and socio-economic goals, (Rowland, 2002). It is essential to illuminate the role of higher education in a developing country like South Africa. In the preceding paragraphs it can be highlighted that higher education has an important role to play in social development and developing the economy of the country. However, according to Badat (2010), universities detract from achieving these important goals because they frequently continue to become a powerful instrument of social exclusion and social injustice.

2.3 STATE OF ACADEMIC EXCLUSION IN SOUTH AFRICAN UNIVERSITIES

Postgraduate education is confronted with enormous challenges (Herman, 2011). South Africa in recent years has experienced a 'brain drain', which has resulted in a shortage of critical skills in the country. The "brain drain" has stimulated universities to generate more postgraduate students. The country has to achieve certain priorities, such as expanding the higher education sector; shifting the focus from elite to mass systems and addressing funding issues; enhancing the quality and image of postgraduate education in a

competitive global market; increasing access and being sensitive to the labour market need. (Herman, 2011).

Postgraduate studies develop innovation, which closes the skills gap existing in modern industrialized societies. Thus, producing postgraduate students is essential in modern industrialized societies. Postgraduate students should be equipped with the relevant knowledge so that they can contribute meaningfully to the modern knowledge economy. Skills in business, ICT, engineering, medicine and the social sciences are in excessive demand globally. South Africa as a developing country lacks sufficient numbers of highly skilled persons in most professions and it has become an important priority of government to address the shortage of skills in the country. Postgraduate students also have an important role to fulfil with respect to the broad societal needs of the country therefore postgraduate students should be developed so that they can respond to the broad societal needs, which exist in the country.

Knowledge is an important contributor to economic development in the modern era. Universities are entrusted with the responsibility of developing the knowledge base required for economic development in the country and, according to Porter (1990), knowledge has the ability to enhance productivity. It progressively establishes the foundation of a country's competitive advantage.

2.4 FORMS AND TYPES OF ACADEMIC EXCLUSION/INCLUSION IN SOUTH AFRICAN HIGHER EDUCATION

2.4.1 Exclusionary dynamics related to admission criteria

The number of African students pursuing higher education was remarkably low until the 1990s. African students entered higher education through racialized access, which was restricted to certain institutions (Bunting, 2006; Akoojee & Nkomo, 2007; Badat, 2009). The early 1990s was marked by an enormous expansion of African student enrolment in higher education (Bunting, 2006; Boughey, 2007; Letseka, Cosser, Breier & Visser, 2010). The academic year 2011 witnessed almost a doubling of student numbers in South African universities in comparison to the 1994 academic year (DHET, 2013a).

A study conducted in 2012 indicated that the participation rate of African and Coloured students in higher education were 14% and 15% respectively, in comparison to the 46% participation rate of Indian students and 57% of white students (CHE, 2012). Scott et al. (2007) illuminate the shortage of candidates entering Universities with necessary school leaving qualifications in mathematics and science, which are subjects that provide access to identified rare skills such as engineering, science and business management (Scott et al., 2007). Scott et al. found that participation rates amongst African students are disproportionately low in engineering, science and management programmes, therefore participation rates are an important focus of new policy.

Higher education institutions regulate admittance of candidates to postgraduate studies through policies they have developed. UKZN (the University of KwaZulu-Natal) requires an Honours level student to obtain an overall mark of 60% in order to progress to the Masters level; to progress to PhD level the candidate has to attain an overall mark of 65% at the Masters level. The criteria developed in the admission policies can be exclusionary to many students who wish to embark on postgraduate studies because many students fail to meet this benchmark used by the institution for selecting its postgraduate students.

The University in such cases requests that a candidate not meeting this requirement must submit a letter of motivation to the Admissions Office for consideration into the specific programme. Contrary to the argument of inclusion and access and the short supply of postgraduate students, such requirements are stringent and detract from the purpose of inclusion and access. In addition, South Africa is also failing to widen access to postgraduate studies; this will not benefit the country in terms of human resources, the labour market and economic objectives. Thus, in our current economic climate where employment opportunities are limited, students prioritise finding employment and retaining employment rather than sacrificing employment opportunities for full-time study.

2.4.2 Exclusionary dynamics related to funding and financial resources

Funding needs are necessary to improve access and success in Universities (Chisholm et al., 2009; Letseka et al., 2010; van der Berg, 2013). Student funding initiatives are an important factor in student success and a lack of finance results in large numbers of

students exiting higher education prematurely. In South Africa poverty is rife and if left unaddressed will contribute to the high student dropout rate at Universities (Letseka et al., 2010). Sufficient financial resources reduce the stress experienced by students from impoverished backgrounds, enabling them to engage actively in academic and campus life. Adequate financial resources create an important condition, which contributes to academic and social integration, and at the end of the day to student success (Jones, Coetzee, Bailey & Wickham 2008).

Funding is not a stand-alone contributor to success but many students would drop out without it, as a result funding is considered the main reason for student dropout. However, other reasons, such as poor health, the death of a family member and lack of academic support are contributing factors to the dropout rates (Tinto in Letseka et al., 2009). According to Ansari and Stock (2011), insufficient funding places pressure on students and forces many of them to find work while they are studying. Educational achievements are affected negatively because working and studying is a 'dual burden' on students. Ansari and Stock (2011) discovered that more than 30% of students perceived their income as insufficient. The researchers conceded that better educational achievement was the result of students being satisfied with their income, resulting in their improved performance in comparison to their peers.

2.4.3 Exclusionary dynamics related to university curriculum – students' background, social and cultural diversity

Postgraduate studies require a high level of skills and expertise in writing, which is very intimidating even for a student who has a good command of language. In South Africa, language proficiency is a barrier for many students and also affects their ability to communicate effectively. Students from township and rural backgrounds experience language issues, which become a verbal communicative barrier, hindering them in developing academic skills like participating in cohorts and defence panels, for example. Communication barriers obstruct students when it comes to defending a position, expressing themselves, participating in discussions and posing questions to their supervisors (Cross et al., 2010). English is usually a third language to which student's exposure at school was insufficient (Jones et al., 2008). The inability to communicate in English also affects social integration (Mawoyo & Hoadley, 2009). This is not only restricted to African students but also affects white Afrikaans-speaking students (Jansen et al., 2010).

Further, supervisors experience many obstacles, which make it challenging for them to relate to their students, for example, they often experience divergent backgrounds in terms of cultural, social and economic experiences. Supervisors often cannot touch base with their students because of the absence of commonalities which affect them in relating to their students (Blanchet-Cohen & Reilly, 2013). At postgraduate level, it is essential for students to adapt to this demanding level of study. Students need to be taught life skills,

which are directly connected to academic experience. In order for them to achieve success with their studies a life skills development programme should be designed to support adjustment of students in a doctoral programme, according to Schreiber and Davidowitz (2012). A life skills development programme should focus in addressing psychosocial issues such as coping with stress and managing workloads directly.

International students experience even greater challenges in comparison to local students. The type of problems includes socio-cultural adaptation, such as adjustment to social customs and norms (Schwarzer et al., 1994). In addition, they experience psychological adaptation resulting in them feeling depressed, anxious, and lonely due to the loss of their social support networks (Sandhu & Asrabadi, 1994; Yang & Clum, 1995). According to Chang (1999), the likelihood of students in higher education institutions engaging with students from different backgrounds would increase, when the compositional diversity of the campus increases. Institutions with high proportions of white students restrict cross-racial interaction and limit student-learning experiences socially and culturally, according to Hurtado, Dey, and Treviño (1994).

2.4.4 Exclusionary dynamics related to university social life

Social integration into university is an imperative element of becoming a successful student. Adjusting to university life is challenging for all students, for example becoming autonomous and coping with new forms of social interaction and academic commitment. These challenges can be particularly overwhelming for students who find the dominant culture of universities socially isolating (Jones et al., 2008; CHE, 2010). Postgraduate

students access university with different social, socio-economic and academic backgrounds, goals and levels of commitment. There are wide ranging differences of race, gender, class, ethnicity, marital status, family responsibilities, academic preparation and prior academic training, achievements and experience. Students are subjected to a socialization process to acclimatize to the postgraduate school's culture and identity in the university. Students frequently have to assess and or replace many of their old values with new ones, which are more compatible with that of the postgraduate school. Many postgraduate students who are unwilling to conform eventually leave, rather than accept the changes (Lovitts, 2001).

Students failing to balance either academic or social integration tend to leave the university. Some students may choose to have more fun instead of completing their coursework and may be encouraged to leave or take a much longer time to complete the degree. Lovitts (2001) believes that students with high levels of social integration should leave early rather than later if the level of financial support is low. Education exclusion is an aspect of social exclusion and establishes itself in a range of social and psychological inequities (Sayed, Subrahmanian, Soudien, Carrim, Balgopalan, Nekhwevha & Samuel 2007). These researchers have found that extreme educational exclusion arises when individuals and groups find themselves systematically excluded from rights and entitlements which are theirs as a result of their membership of a society and includes denial of resources and facilities. At the other end of the spectrum, exclusion could take the form of subtle forms of manipulation of the delivery of educational goods and services to favour some individuals and groups at the expense of others, or the reinforcement of

negative or discriminatory social attitudes towards individuals. In these cases, while the effects are often as damaging as when extreme forms of exclusion occur, proof is harder to adduce (Sayed et al., 2007).

2.4.5 Exclusionary dynamics related to university's infrastructural responsiveness to social diversity

According to Kabeer (2000), disadvantage occurs in social exclusion when the innumerable institutional mechanisms through which resources are allocated functions in such a way as to systematically exclude particular groups of people from the resources and recognition that would allow them to participate fully in the life of that society. The exploration of exclusion can therefore be seen as a particular aspect of institutional analysis, one centrally concerned with the dual processes of entitlement and disentanglement. According to North (1991), institutions can be described as the 'rules of the game'. Institutions allocate resources, both symbolic and material, so that institutional rules are, among other things, rules about membership and access. Institutions differ, as do their rules, as to who has access, on what terms and with what degree of certainty.

Doctoral candidates are required to produce work that is more original and may therefore need more input in developing depth, synthesis and critical ability. Doctoral students also need to acquire technical competence, analyse data, manage their time and personal responsibilities and build up a network of peers and expert colleagues; therefore, they

need to find literature, analyse and interpret data and explore interactive learning opportunities. Students' success can be achieved via training and research methods, seminars, and realistic response time from supervisors. Institutions should establish environments within faculties, schools and research centres that can create and maintain a vibrant excellent resource, which can in turn encourage graduate students and their supervisors to collaborate with industry and funding bodies so as to collectively develop intellectual capacity for the benefit of all. An exclusionary mechanism is that of social closure, through which 'social collectivities seek to maximise rewards by restricting access to resources and opportunities to a limited circle of eligibles' (Parkin, 1982). Tertiary education requires a student to be psychologically prepared because the curriculum is demanding and challenging. In order to achieve success, a conducive environment is equally important.

In South Africa many efforts have been made to transform institutions, there are however some institutions that have not transformed totally. These institutions have failed to address social justice issues adequately and still discriminate on the basis of race and disability. Generally, these institutions have made slow progress with transformation and are the predominantly the elite institutions who have not lowered the bar to accommodate previously disadvantaged students (Akoojee 2007). For example, the institution in which this study is based provides little support to disabled students. Some of the infrastructure required are more ramps, ablution facilities and elevators to accommodate disabled students.

2.5 FACTORS AFFECTING ACADEMIC EXCLUSION IN HIGHER EDUCATION

2.5.1 Family commitments and academic exclusion in higher education

Students occasionally experience personal problems. These can include family difficulties, problems in personal relationship, cultural adjustments, financial pressures and problems associated with employment. The importance of these innumerable problems should not be under-emphasized (Salmon 1992). Salmon 1992 suggests that students need considerable assistance in attaining an appropriate orientation for presentations such as defence. A seminar approach, as proposed by Lessing and Schulze (2002) and by Malfroy (2005), is useful in this regard because a seminar approach emphasizes research as a process, rather than a product. Balancing doctoral studies with family is a challenge for doctoral students. Some doctoral students are not pleased to juggle family with their studying workload. They experience, guilt, worry and anxiety when they have to sacrifice time away from their family, which is needed, for their doctoral studies. Some doctoral students could take a decision to leave the programme if they cannot cope with the guilt and anxiety they experience from neglecting their family. According to Watts (2010), the supervision of part-time doctoral students is a long-term academic initiative requiring resilience on the part of both the supervisor and the student because of the fractured student individuality of the part-time doctoral candidate, who is balancing a range of work, study and family commitments. Strategies to support part-time doctoral students have to be practical, well planned and sensitive to the individual's situations.

2.5.2 Work commitments and academic exclusion in higher education

Students experience challenges with juggling work with their doctoral study workload. Doctoral studies require excessive time and commitment by the student, resulting in anxiety and elevated stress levels. Students require high levels of motivation and goal setting which could result in their persistence to achieve success with their studies. The need to advance in their careers could be a motivator for some doctoral candidates to remain persistent with their study. Work commitments consume valuable study time, which leaves the student less time to dedicate to their study (Letseka, 2009).

2.5.3 Role of gender in family-work commitment and exclusion in higher education

Woman experience both economic and cultural forms of injustice. They form one of the groups whom Fraser (1997) refers to as 'bivalent collectivities' which can be described as social groups for whom economic disadvantage is tied up with cultural-valuational disadvantage. In most societies, gender is a key structuring principle in the allocation of labour, property and other valued resources. Women bear the responsibility of reproductive labour and are not considered equal to men in the sense that they are excluded from rights to property. Women enjoy fewer rights than men and male family members influence the entitlements. Women are also disadvantaged in the labour market because men are assigned to higher paid and managerial positions, resulting in women occupying lower paid positions.

According to Kabeer (1994), women have not been altogether excluded from development but their development is affected by adverse terms. Society places many pressures on women. Women have to be more submissive and are expected to take care of their in-laws, husband and children. Therefore, education and career are secondary to these issues. If a woman has a child in the middle of her study, her academic progress would be impeded. She would still have to continue going to class, writing papers and coping with motherhood. Women are also regarded as caregivers who have to take care of their in-laws, spouse and children, which could cause delays in their studies. Most women have to cope simultaneously with the demands of fulfilling their domestic responsibilities, their work responsibilities and the enormous demands of the doctoral studies. It is because of these reasons that women have greater challenges with coping at this demanding level of study than men do.

Female students need to develop their ability to effectively manage and cope with stress so that they can become resilient in this level of study. Many women take longer to complete their studies because of the pressures exerted on them, which exacerbate their stress levels and motivation hence leading to their academic exclusion or their abandoning their studies. In more conservative cultures, there is a tendency to discourage women from achieving greater academic success than men because it may be seen as unacceptable for a woman to achieve greater academic success than their male counterpart. Molebatsi (2009) argues that education is the key to the empowerment of women and achieving gender equality. In South Africa and many other parts of the world, race, class and gender divisions have affected education.

2.5.4 Quality of supervision support and academic exclusion in higher education

Support is essential at postgraduate level both from the supervisor and family level. A lack of support could affect the levels of performance. The inability of academic staff to effectively supervise could present more challenges to a postgraduate student's success. Quality supervision is necessary to enable students to complete their studies timeously (Seagram, Gould & Pyke 1998, Lovitts, 2001; Dinham & Scott, 1999). Latona and Browne (2001) recommended that accurate and timely feedback, frequent meetings with students, clearly negotiated expectations and responsibilities, supportive and mutual relationships with students, early start on their topics, sticking to a topic and continuity are elements imperative to good supervisory practice. Ismail, Abiddin & Hassan (2011) emphasise that the reason causing delays in postgraduate students completing their studies successfully is largely the problems they encounter. Lessing & Schultz (2002) categorises these problems as threefold: the research design, collecting and processing of information and the writing of the report. Mouton (2001) elaborates that the problems are due to poor supervision and lack of data collecting, processing of information and report writing skills by the student. Hockey (1994) and Smith and West-Burnham (1993) conclude that the fruitful completion of a dissertation is as much a task of the capabilities of the student as of the supervisor.

Supervision can be regarded as a relationship and a process. Some supervisors consider their relationship with their research students as private and reject public scrutiny of what

transpires at individual supervision sessions (Waghid, 2006). The supervision relationship enables a student to receive written feedback, which enhances his learning (Kumar & Stracke, 2007). In this process, it is necessary to develop friendship and trust as an authentic support tool (Waghid, 2006). A supervisor should have the skill of managing criticism and overcoming interactional difficulty and develop effective strategies leading to timely completion of a student's study (Li & Seale, 2007).

According to Armstrong (2004), relationships with supervisors contribute to the satisfaction and productivity that students find in their supervision and are critical for successful completion. Students regard good relationships with supervisors as an important aspect contributing to the quality of the research experience (Armstrong, 2004). Students and supervisors should work collaboratively, implying that supervisors should work together, with the students actively in a negotiated relationship that Cohen (2004) refers to as clinical supervision, in which ideas are shared between the student and supervisor by working together in addressing a problem. The implication of clinical supervision is that both the student and supervisor need to be responsible and should be equally blamed if something goes wrong. Students exposed to cohort supervision differ in their research stages and supervision experiences (Nkosi, 2011).

Students' affirmative experiences with supervision are related with supervisors that employ a hands-on approach, where supervisors are closely involved in structuring the thesis, giving directions, setting standards, making students aware of problems and constraints and co-authoring publications (Nkosi, 2011). The University of Missouri at

Columbia has developed colleague circles in which each new doctoral student receives guidance from a group of more advanced students (Gardner 2008). The purpose of colleague circles is to enable new students and peer mentors to meet on a monthly basis to discuss a range of topics of concern so that programme expectations and pre-dissertation milestones can be clearly articulated at an early stage of the study. According to Samara (2006), group supervision can be used to supplement individual supervision because students can be trained to be supervisors to each other considering the time and supervisor resources. Students can lend support to each other through group supervision. Group supervision requires mutual trust for the group to function effectively because the act of sharing texts with other members is very sensitive and difficult for many.

2.6 SUPPORT MECHANISMS AGAINST ACADEMIC EXCLUSION IN HIGHER EDUCATION

2.6.1 Support mechanisms related to admission criteria

In a post-apartheid South Africa, access for previously disadvantaged students has significantly increased. According to Yeld, (2010) alternative admissions procedures can create a route into higher education for previously disadvantaged students. According to Brockwell & Davis (2013) the admissions debates are highly emotive and politically complex, and receive criticism from the public and the media, especially if an institution considers other measures than race to recognize disadvantage and support equity in the student body (Brockwell & Davis, 2013). Institutions are required to be more responsive

in order to adapt to the challenges of improving access to the broader society. In order to achieve this goal, universities as institutions of higher learning are required to provide academic and other support to an increasingly diverse student body and to develop retention strategies to enable students to complete their studies successfully (El-Kawas, 2001). Postgraduate studies are more demanding and require much more commitment and dedication from the student than undergraduate studies do. In South Africa many institutions have broadened access by lowering the bar for example, entrance requirements for certain programmes have been revised to accommodate more students. The challenge is then to increase the throughput rate in all academic programmes offered in higher education institutions.

2.6.2 Support mechanisms related to funding and financial resources

Financial aid is essential to address student success and for equalizing different socio-economic groups, thereby addressing economic barriers for needy students. Financial aid minimises the burden on students by reducing the cost of studies on their side, however it also reduces their persistence, which may affect graduation. According to DesJardins, Ahlburg, & McCall (2002), the effect that financial aid could have on persistence and graduation is not monetary. Students receiving financial aid do not have to sacrifice their focus by working in jobs, which affects the amount of time required for academic activities (Cabrera, Nora, & Castaneda, 1992). Financial aid provided to needy students could reduce the dropout rate at universities for students not having the funds required (Singell, 2004).

A model that would be effective, according to Salmi (1992), would be the establishment of a range of lower cost alternative institutions with different missions, functions and modes of delivery, in the form of community colleges, adult and continuing education and distance learning programmes. South African university fees are costly and the emphasis is to provide quality education. A yardstick of measuring quality is throughput. The universities are failing to achieve throughput at undergraduate level and as a result, this will affect students at postgraduate level. In a comparative study, in which the focus was graduation rates, it was found that South Africa presented low rates in its public university system in comparison to higher education systems elsewhere (Scott et al., 2007).

2.6.3 Support mechanisms related to curriculum responsiveness

South Africa is a diverse country and the student population in South African universities reflect the different forms of diversity. The establishment and implementation of suitable teaching methods are required to accommodate student diversity in order to improve student success (Scott et al., 2007, cited in Quinn, 2012). Academic staff development is essential to equip academic staff with the essential supervisory capacity required to effectively supervise postgraduate students. Postgraduate students experience many challenges resulting from “student deficit, institutional deficit and elitist” discourses, therefore lecturers will have to explore new technologies such as social media for communicating with students (Quinn, 2012). Higher education institutions need to be responsive in today’s globally competitive knowledge economy. Responsiveness in

teaching and learning at the tertiary level focuses on curricula and pedagogy. Curricula need to be updated regularly; according to Clark (2001), different academic departments at universities will have to amend their curricula every two to three years so that the content is relevant and in line with evolving boundaries of scientific knowledge. In South Africa, increased access and higher participation rates have resulted in greater diversity in student populations at higher education institutions. The increasing diversity is reflected in students' academic preparation, financial means, capabilities, motivation and interests. Such diversity impacts on pedagogy. El-Khawas (2001) views diversity at a global level in student populations as a factor for propelling a shift in pedagogical emphasis from staff teaching to student learning.

Institutions need to respond to a comprehensive range of obstacles to learning and participation experienced by students. Other barriers, which exist, arise from disability, race, class and gender to mention a few (Ngcobo & Muthukrishna, 2011). Higher education institutions can develop inclusivity by responding to diversity in the student population and by broadening the understanding and conceptualisation of this diversity (Ngcobo & Muthukrishna, 2011). Curricula should be developed that are inclusive of language, class, race, disability and gender at higher education institutions.

2.6.4 Support mechanisms related to universities' infrastructural responsiveness towards social diversity

Universities have increased their enrolments in recent years by widening access to accommodate students, regardless of disabilities, race, class, gender and socio economic status. Institutions have been criticised on their state of preparedness towards the increased student numbers entering higher education (Jones et al., 2008). The focus recently is towards the question of how universities can address the challenges regarding the increase in student numbers in the various universities in the country. Leaving these challenges unaddressed would result in a reduction of throughput and student retention. Institutions would also have to be sensitive and plays deeper concentration on the “material and cultural contexts of higher education transformation” (CHE, 2010:36).

Badat (2010) mentions that development of academic capabilities is associated with the provision of essential capacities with respect to the infrastructure and equipment required for effective teaching and learning and the creation of good quality graduates. Although students with disabilities place a financial strain on higher education institutions due to infrastructural requirements needed for better supervision, they can be accommodated by making improvements to the infrastructure. Higher education institutions attempt to accommodate students with disabilities by providing more conducive teaching spaces adapted for mutual engagement through the use of advanced technologies such as smart boards, libraries and study spaces.

2.7 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF THE STUDY

This study was guided by Children's Geographies and New Sociology of Childhood Studies as its theoretical framework. Although this theory has largely been used on research specifically related to children (Barker, J. & Weller, S. 2003), its principles have been creatively applied in this study, in a manner that provides deeper insights in understanding dynamics of academic exclusions in a higher education institution. Children's geographies helped the study to understand location of postgraduate students in the exclusionary processes of the university (Barker & Weller, 2003). These included the identities of such students, their backgrounds as well as the social and academic positioning of the academic exclusion phenomena in this context. The new sociology of childhood studies (Frones, Jenks & Qvortrup, 2000) helped the study to document the creative and innovative ways through which the academically excluded postgraduate students engaged with their circumstances in order to enhance their chances of being academically included and thus complete their studies. My particular study draws from Children's Geographies and the New Sociology of Childhood Studies because these trajectories focus on social justice and human rights phenomena, university students experience when they become academically excluded. The key word geography bears resemblance to Children's Geographies, which my study derived from. The only exception being the spaces and places experienced by university students, which may be different from children's spaces and places.

In South Africa, the South African Constitution protects human rights; the Bill of Rights addresses issues of social exclusion, inclusion and diversity. The Bill of Rights ensures that all citizens receive equal treatment and are free from discrimination. Diversity is protected in the Constitution. The State according to the Constitution may not discriminate directly or indirectly against any person on the basis of race, gender, sex, pregnancy, marital status, ethnic, or social origin, colour, sexual orientation, age, disability, religion, conscience, belief, culture, language and birth. Despite the institution adhering to these principles laid out in the Constitution, students still experienced academic exclusion (Constitution of South Africa, 1996 – Section 28 of the Bill of Rights). Children's geographies allowed us to draw parallels between the school and the university as institutions and examine spaces and places in the context of postgraduate higher education institutions.

2.6 CONCLUSION

This chapter has focused largely on the forms and factors of exclusion. What has been emphasised in this chapter is that the cost of university fees is exorbitant and in South Africa, we have a shortage of postgraduate students. In order to increase the South African postgraduate output, we require a system change in that institutions have to devise strategies to minimize academic exclusions. One of the barriers to remove, so that we can make postgraduate studies more attractive, is to widen access to more students to embark on this level of education. The challenge also lies in retaining students so that high completion rates can be achieved. It is fundamental that exclusionary factors be

addressed in order to achieve a truly inclusive higher education system in South Africa and high throughput rate at postgraduate level. This chapter also illuminates the challenges of women embarking on postgraduate studies as well as the challenges presented by language barriers.

CHAPTER THREE

3 METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the study was to examine the geographies of postgraduate students' academic exclusions in one school within the University of KwaZulu-Natal. The researcher adopted a qualitative approach in this study. The research design, the sample of the study, sampling techniques, and the techniques of data generation are presented in this chapter. The narratives of participants were used to generate data, through the use of semi-structured individual interviews.

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the research methodology and research design adopted in this particular study. The chapter also outlines the research processes that were utilized in researching the participants. The researcher developed a semi-structured interview schedule to elicit responses from the individual interviews. The chapter includes a discussion on the ethical considerations of the study, validity and reliability, and the procedures utilized to analyse the data.

3.2 RESEARCH PARADIGM

Henning et al. (2004) define a paradigm as “a theory or hypothesis”. A paradigm can be described as a framework within which theories are constructed. Researchers can use a

paradigm to define their own perspectives and construct their own understanding of how things are connected. The paradigm 'develops new concepts and stresses constructing theoretical interpretations' (Neuman, 2006). The researcher does not only rely on a specific question, but considers the theoretical paradigm in an in-depth inquiry and open-minded way. The inquiry and open-mindedness assisted me to keep on probing during interviews to get a deeper insight into the phenomenon under discussion and expose other hidden issues related to challenges experienced by excluded postgraduate students and their experiences of exclusion. The study was approached from an interpretivist paradigm. The data generation technique adopted enabled the researcher to listen to the voices of the participants. The interpretive paradigm enabled the researcher to give meaning to the data based on the researcher's experience and interpretation. The use of the interpretive paradigm aimed to generate a descriptive analysis that elicits a deep, interpretive understanding of a social phenomenon.

According to Terre Blanche and Kelly (2004), interpretive methods are aimed at describing and interpreting people's feelings and experiences in human terms rather than through quantification and measurement. In this study, I focused on describing the "academically excluded" student's experiences with a view to interpreting the meanings that these participants had given to their experiences. Denzin and Lincoln (2000) suggest that, whilst working from the interpretive paradigm, certain demands are made on the researcher. These demands include; "the questions the researcher asks and the interpretations he or she brings to them" (p. 22). In this research study, the research

questions and analysis of data elicited from the research questions were guided by the interpretivist approach.

The interpretivist paradigm used in this study facilitated a process whereby the researcher relied on the research “participants’ view of the situation (or phenomenon) being studied” (Creswell, 2003, p.8) while taking into cognition the researcher’s own influences in terms of experiences and background as impacting on the research. Pan and Tan (2011) caution that our bias and prejudices influence us to see things in certain ways and not others. The researcher should be aware that, in the interpretivist paradigm, the researcher as being part of the research process is not perceived as being entirely objective (Carcary, 2009).

3.3 RESEARCHER POSITIONING

My experiences as a postgraduate administrator for the past 5 years sparked my desire to pursue a study that aims to understand more deeply the phenomenon of exclusion and inclusion in postgraduate studies. This was particularly due to numerous cases of academic exclusions that I personally observed, a problem that was worsening each year. I have observed that, at every examination board meeting I have attended, increasingly high numbers of students were served with slow progress warnings and academic exclusion notices. It was from this professional experience that I was motivated to find significance and believed that some deeper understanding of exclusion/inclusion was necessary in order to find ways and explore the curbing of this challenge. At present, we

do not have much understanding regarding this phenomenon (inclusion in higher education) because most of the debates and policy focus have been on inclusion at the schooling level.

The neglect of higher education and the postgraduate sector in particular implied that the students at these institutions were at risk of not achieving their academic and educational goals. It was appropriate and meaningful to broaden the focus in inclusive education in higher education institutions where students were generally trained for professional employment. Meaningful and sustainable inclusion at higher educational institutions could result in transforming the broader South African society and also lead educational authorities to understand the factors that contribute to postgraduate students' being excluded in higher education institutions. Such a significant understanding in this area could help in devising strategies aimed at improving the quality of educational delivery, supervision support and throughput rate in order to address the challenge of postgraduate academic exclusions in higher education institutions.

3.4 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.4.1 Qualitative research approach

The study adopted a qualitative research approach because the key focus of research concentrated predominantly on the experiences of students through the use of narratives. Qualitative research allows the researcher to obtain rich data from a small number of

participants (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007) and is described as an 'inquiry' process of understanding that explores a social or human problem (Cresswell, 2008, p.1). The researcher selected the inquiry process so that rich data could be extracted from a small sample size. The sample consisted of six participants who were purposively selected for this particular study. According to Mouton & Prozesky (2001), qualitative research attempts to generate data emerging from real-world settings where the phenomenon worthy of examining is revealed naturally. The phenomenon in this study was the experiences of academically excluded postgraduate students.

3.4.2 Narrative inquiry

The researcher focused on a narrative inquiry in this particular study. The intent of a narrative inquiry was to create a space for my participants to tell their stories about their doctoral study experiences. Narrative inquiry has been used across many disciplines and research areas, for example, language studies, multiculturalism, gender studies, ethnic studies and cross-cultural studies (Bell, 2002). Webster (2007) mention that researchers who adopt narrative inquiry are of the view that people, individually and socially, can tell stories about their lived experiences. A key point made by these scholars was that narrative inquiry is a reflective study of people's lived experiences as a story. According to Clandinin & Huber (2010) narratives are representations and reconstructions of past memories (Clandinin & Huber, 2010; Reissman, 2007). Narratives could involve past experiences or present happenings and people tell stories that are unique to their particular contexts (Reissman, 2007).

Dhunpath and Samuel (2009) affirmed that, in narrative inquiry, the narrator is encouraged to recall, reflect and re-live life experiences. Further, they narrate their stories with a particular sequence and logic. The researcher has to extract the meaning from the unfolding of events as they are narrated. It has been argued that a narrative inquiry is an appropriate approach when the researcher wants to examine deeply personal accounts of people's lives and experiences (Langellier & Peterson, 2004). Bell (2002) mentions that through stories, participant's reflections and interpretations enable them to reconstruct their own images of their realities and these may be images that they were previously unaware of.

3.5 STUDY PARTICIPANTS

3.5.1 The geographic and socio-economic context of the participants

This study was conducted at the Edgewood campus of the University of KwaZulu-Natal, which is located in Durban in South Africa. Edgewood is one of the five campuses of the University of KwaZulu Natal in the area of Pinetown, approximately 20 kilometres from Durban city centre. There are roughly 7000 students enrolled at Edgewood, most of whom were doing their undergraduate pre-service, Bachelor of Education teacher training qualification. About a quarter of the student population consists of Masters and PhD students, who are mainly part-time as they are employed as teachers or in other capacities in the Education Department. A small contingent consists of international

students, who were mainly enrolled as full-time students. The postgraduate programmes comprise of students from divergent race groups. The majority of students are South African's who come from previously disadvantaged and impoverished backgrounds. Most of them were schooled during the apartheid era under the so-called Bantu education system.

3.6 SAMPLING PROCEDURES

This study was conducted at the University in Kwa-Zulu Natal, where I have been employed for the past seven years. The reason for selecting this institution was due to its location which was convenient and resulted in a reduction in time, travelling and other costs. Exclusion affected students from different denominations irrespective of age, race and gender. The target group was postgraduate students who were currently or have once been academically excluded. The university enrolled diverse students from different social, political and economic backgrounds that were represented by the sample. Six participants from diverse social groupings and backgrounds were interviewed.

3.6.1 Study sample

A sample represents a section of the population that is considered to be used as participants in a study. The sample represents a small portion of a population and is characteristic of the entire set of aims or persons that collectively comprise the focus of study. The process of sampling involves using specific criteria that are used for selecting

the participants of the study (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007). The participants of this particular study were sampled using purposive sampling (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007), which implied that the participants were considered according to specific characteristics such as their gender, year of study, and area of study, for example. I would be interviewing three male and three female participants. Four of them were staff members at the University. One was a retired staff member at another University and one was a Head of Department at a public school. All participants were employed at educational institutions.

For the purpose of this study, the participants were postgraduate PhD students, who were currently or have once been academically excluded from 2012 to 2014. According to Frank (2000), narratives are the stories told by people. The storytellers are usually not inclined to give voice to themselves because storytellers merely tell their stories and the researcher interprets the stories by analyzing the underlying narratives and giving voice to the storyteller (Riley & Hawe, 2004). The sample size was appropriate and produced adequate data to answer the research questions of this study. The study was conducted on the premises of the selected university located in KZN. The motivation for using purposive random sampling for selecting the participants of the study was that the results cannot be directly generalized to all universities in South Africa, and this was one of the limitations of the study.

3.7 METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION

The data collection methods were based on the narratives of six students who were the participants of the study. The mechanism used for data collection was a semi-structured interview schedule, which was used for the individual interviews. The aim was to develop a more in-depth understanding and to develop conclusions from the findings of the participants' experiences about academic exclusions, based on the questions, which appeared in the interview schedule. A semi-structured interview schedule was designed for the individual interviews. The interview schedule included questions based on the students' experiences relating to the postgraduate academic exclusions, experiences related to the accessibility of resources, experiences related to support, forms of inclusionary and exclusionary dynamics within the university, and navigation of inclusionary and exclusionary dynamics. These questions provided data from the perspectives of the student's experiences, factors that contributed to academic exclusion and how they navigated and negotiated the process of academic exclusion.

Interviewing is a means of collecting data as well as gaining knowledge from individuals. Interviews require participants to get involved and express their views or feelings. The interviews yielded information through the students' narratives of their experiences of being academically excluded at the university. The interview schedule comprised of open-ended questions. The questioning and probing extended the open-endedness of the interviews. The probing elicited additional information and led to clarifications on issues raised by the participants. The individual interviews conducted with the participants were

audio recorded and later transcribed for data analysis. The purpose of the voice recordings was communicated to participants prior to participating in the study. The participants were interviewed individually. The researcher made an endeavour to put each participant at ease through the informal implementation and by explaining to them the nature of the research, and what their participation contributed to the study. In this study, the interviewees were able to discuss their perception and interpretation in regard to their academic exclusion experiences. (Kvale, 1996).

The study is a qualitative study based on a narrative inquiry. A narrative inquiry was appropriate for this particular study, which focused on students' stories of their lived experiences of being academically excluded and the inclusionary processes and exclusionary pressures, which impacted them. The researcher adopted the qualitative method to produce in-depth and rich oral data about the students' personal experiences over time at the university. The participation was voluntary and the participants were interviewed at the university in an appropriate and convenient venue, using face-to-face contact. A list of appropriate research questions was devised prior to narrative inquiry. The participants were asked open-ended questions, which enabled the researcher to probe the participants to extract in-depth responses.

3.7.1 Individual interviews

Individual interviews sessions were planned and conducted with the participants. The interviews were recorded and transcribed by the researcher. A discussion was held with

the participants prior to the commencement of the interviews. The participants were informed about the use of a voice recorder and that all interviews had to be voice recorded. The researcher requested permission for the voice recording. All participants agreed to the voice recording. The purpose of the voice recording was to assist with the transcription process and to provide an accurate account of the participants' feelings when they provided the narratives during the interviews. The voice recordings captured their emotional and vocal state. The researcher reminded the participants to remain calm and assured the participants that the information would be treated with the strictest confidentiality. The semi-structured interviews aided the researcher to probe, restate and track interesting issues. The interviews were conducted over a one-week period. The students availed themselves readily for the interviews and the interviews were conducted without any anomalies. The researcher remained professional and was neutral during the process and allowed the participants to speak naturally.

3.7.2 Document analysis

A document analysis was also conducted in order to extend the data collection process. The key purpose of the document analysis was to provide a statistical background on postgraduate academic exclusions at the university. Graphs were created to illustrate the data retrieved from the documents. The graphs clarified the data after they were analysed. The advantages of using document analysis have been identified by several researchers (Bowen, 2009; McMillan and Schuhmacher, 2001; Creswell 2008). The identified advantages of document analysis include the following:

- 1) Documents provide background information as well as historical insight.
- 2) Documents provide supplementary research data. Information and insights derived from documents can be valuable additions to a knowledge base.
- 3) Documents can be analysed as a way to verify findings or validate evidence from other sources.

Sociologists use document analysis to verify their findings (Angrosino & Mays de Pérez, 2000). If the documented evidence is contradictory rather than corroboratory, the researcher is expected to investigate further. When there is convergence of information from different sources, readers of the research report usually have greater confidence in the credibility of the findings. Document analysis is a systematic procedure for reviewing or evaluating documents, both printed and electronic material. Corbin and Strauss (2008) state that document analysis requires that data be examined and interpreted in order to elicit meaning, gain understanding and develop empirical knowledge. Document analysis yields data-excerpts, quotations or entire passages that are then organized into major themes, categories and case examples, specifically through content analysis (Labuschagne, 2003).

3.8 VALIDITY AND TRUSTWORTHINESS

Validity is a common problem concerning all types of research. To ensure that the research was valid and reliable, the researcher had to ensure that the data was authentic. The researcher addressed validity by ensuring that participants spoke freely during the interview process. The researcher had to ensure that the research was sound, in other

words it was reliable so that it could be trusted (Cohen et al., 2013). Validity should be applied to several stages of the research process (Cohen et al., 2007). Validity is therefore applicable to the instrument design, sampling procedures, data collection and interpretation of the data. It makes absolute sense that if the data collection method, for instance, is not valid, then the conclusion the researcher draws from the data will also not be valid. Triangulation (Cohen et al., 2007) is the use of two or more methods of data gathering. In this study, voice recordings and transcripts were used to strengthen validity. Another appropriate method, which was used to ensure validity in the study, was to assure the participants that they would remain anonymous and that they would be given pseudonyms. The effect of protecting their identities was intended to enable them to speak honestly without the fear of having to be traced.

The data was also cross-examined to determine whether it made sense. The data was not tampered with in any way and was made available to the interviewees on completion of the interview process through an informal feedback session to discuss the findings and outcomes of the research. According to Cohen et al. (2007), bias could arise from the participants' subjectivity, opinions, attitudes and feelings. The study was qualitative in nature and the reliability of the data was dependent on the honesty and integrity in reporting, interpreting the depth of factors and richness of the data acquired (Cohen et al., 2007).

3.9 DATA ANALYSIS

Content analysis was applied to the interview data to identify meaningful phenomena in the data. Descriptive codes were allocated and themes were generated after examining the relations in the data to make it more meaningful. The researcher had to examine all the data thoroughly to determine whether the coding was accurate in relation to the phenomena. The descriptive codes, which had connected with each other meaningfully, were grouped into categories such as student experiences with academic exclusions, factors that contribute to academic exclusions and how students navigate and negotiate the inclusionary and exclusionary dynamics they experience at this university. These categories made it possible to identify the main themes present in the data. The data was re-examined and restructured according to these themes.

Finally, thematic coding was carried out to determine the general themes for the data. The codes at this level included themes like “students’ experiences of exclusion,” “inclusionary and exclusionary dynamics in the educational lives of these students related to academic exclusion,” and “how students actively navigate the inclusionary and exclusionary dynamics they experience at this university.” The thematic coding assisted to create the report structure, which presented the descriptions and interpretations of the findings.

3.10 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ethical issues applicable to research in general and those that affected the nature of this study in particular were considered. The method adopted was to ensure that the participants were treated with respect and that confidentiality of the participants was ensured. The researcher had obtained ethical clearance from the University of KwaZulu-Natal and sought permission from other relevant authorities including the Dean and Head of the School of Education, the Ethics Committee and the participants. Ethical issues were not compromised during the research. Letters requesting permission to conduct research were handed to the relevant authorities, including the Registrar. The participants involved in the study completed consent forms. All participants were assured that confidentiality and anonymity would be maintained. The participants were provided with a simple explanation that their participation in the research project was voluntary. The researcher also explained to the participants very simply that they could withdraw from the study at any time. Young and Barret (2001) mentioned that ensuring confidentiality of all information, and anonymity for participants, are necessary components for building trust. It was essential that the researcher developed trust between herself and the participants. The researcher had achieved trust by negotiating access with the participants and promising confidentiality around the participant's identities. The researcher had to detach herself from emotion and biasness as a researcher.

3.10 CONCLUSION

In this chapter, the research design was presented briefly. The research method has also been outlined. The sample procedures were outlined, as were the processes for both collection and analysis of data. The next chapter will present a discussion of the research findings.

CHAPTER FOUR

4 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This study sets out to explore geographies of postgraduate students and to investigate the different factors that contribute to academic exclusions. The aim was to understand how we could enhance inclusivity in the university by concentrating on the dynamics that cause postgraduate students to be excluded, as well as to learn from the excluded postgraduate students how they actively negotiated and navigated the exclusionary dynamics within the context of this university. The previous chapter discussed the methodologies, paradigm, and methods of data collection, data analysis, validity and trustworthy issues as well as the ethical consideration undertaken in conducting this study. This chapter presents the findings, interpretations and discussions of the empirical data. It begins with the profile of the postgraduate academic enrolment and exclusion in order to highlight the severity and seriousness of the question of academic exclusion in higher education.

4.2 PROFILE OF POSTGRADUATE ACADEMIC ENROLMENT AND EXCLUSION: SOME INTERESTING STATISTICS

The following statistical information provides a comparison of postgraduate enrolment and exclusion. Institutional Intelligence of the University provided this information. This statistical information pertains to the masters and doctoral programmes. The data clearly indicates the number of students enrolled during the period 2012 to 2016 and the number of students that were academically excluded each year.

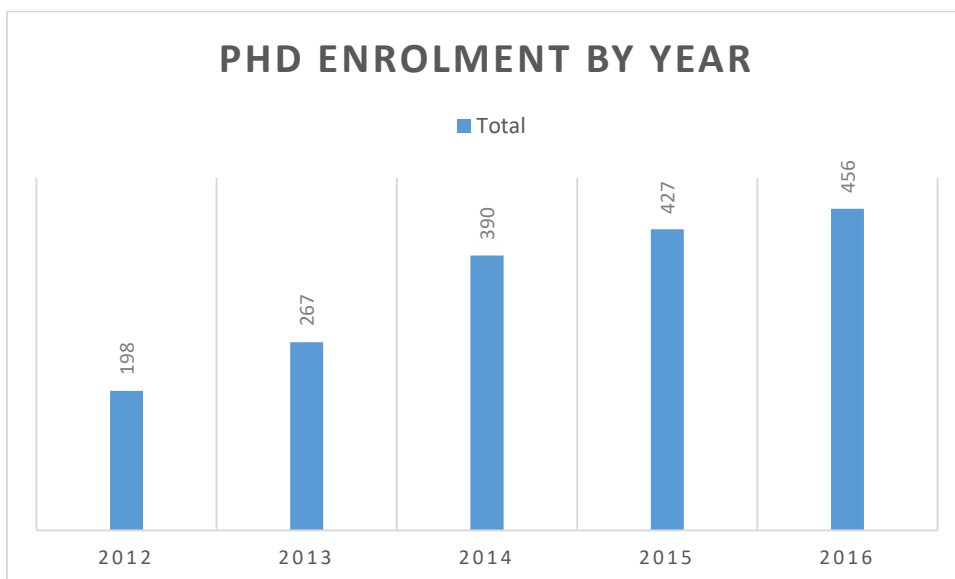


Figure 4-1 PhD enrolment 2012-2016

In Figure 4-1, the PhD enrolment by year is depicted. It also highlights the increase in PhD enrolments from 2012 to 2016. The main reason for the increase could be attributed to the national drive for increasing postgraduate intake.

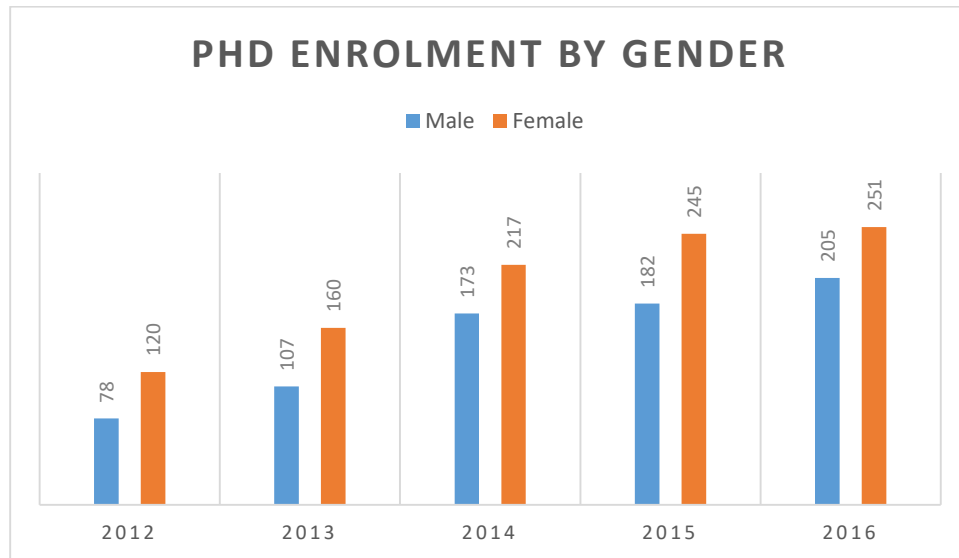


Figure 4-2 PhD enrolment by gender

In figure 4-2, PhD enrolment by gender is depicted. It is evident that there is a greater number of females that embarked on their PhD studies over the whole period from 2012 to 2016.

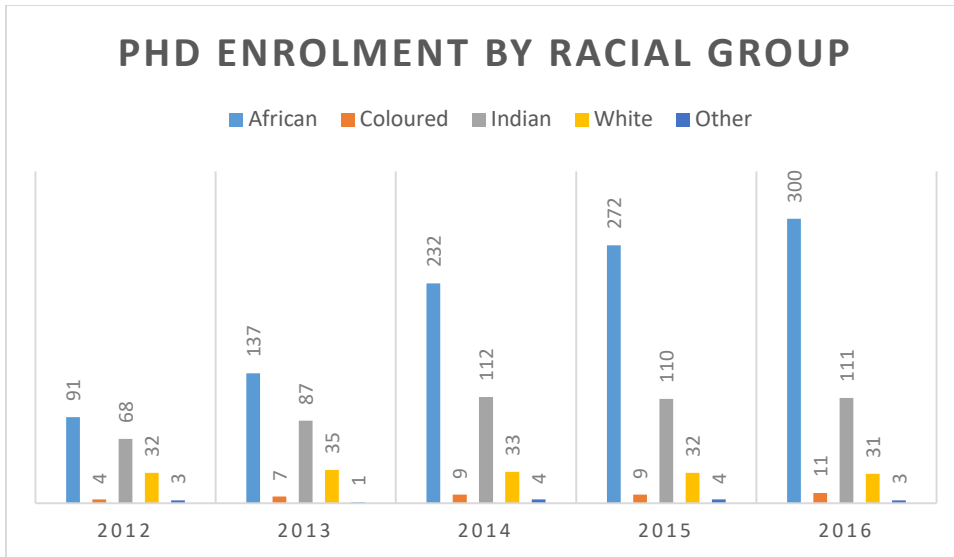


Figure 4-3 PhD enrolment by racial group

In Figure 4-3 PhD enrolment by racial group is depicted. There is a steady increase in African students from 2012 to 2016 embarking on their PhD studies.

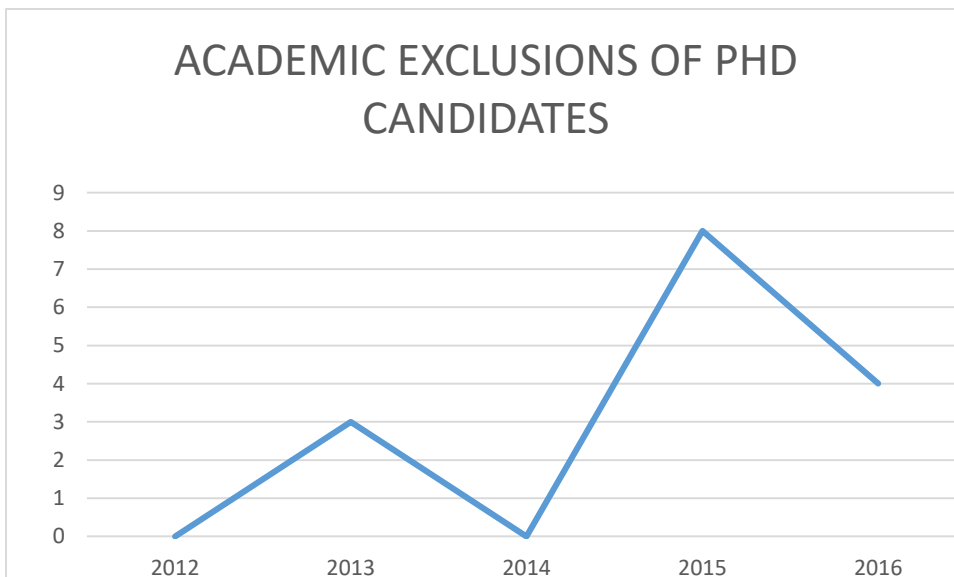


Figure 4-4 Academic exclusions of PhD candidates

Figure 4-4 depicts the academic exclusions for PhD candidates. This illustration depicts an increase in postgraduate academic exclusion in 2015. The year 2012 indicates that the number of exclusions were much lower than 2015.

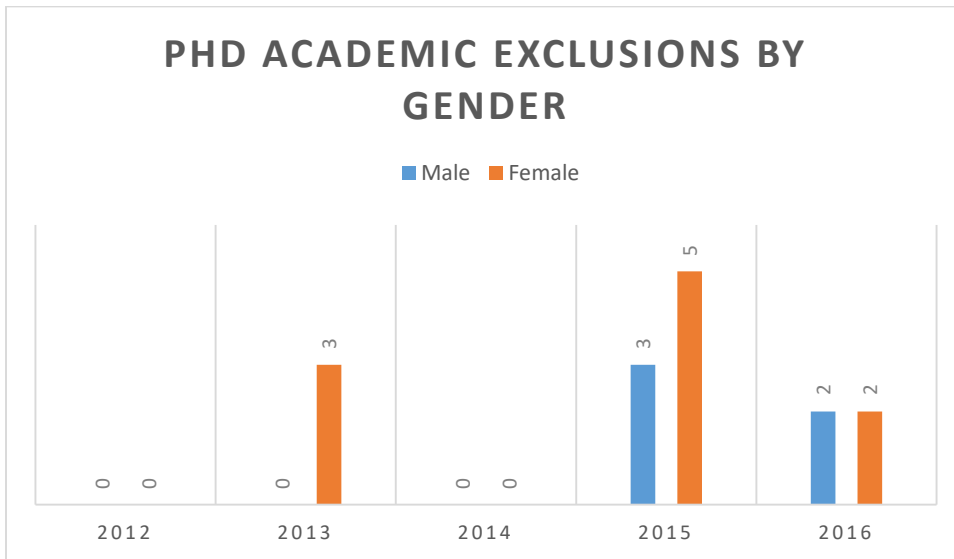


Figure 4-5 Academic exclusions by gender

In Figure 4-5 PhD academic exclusions by gender are depicted. While generally there are more women than men have been excluded, the total number is low.

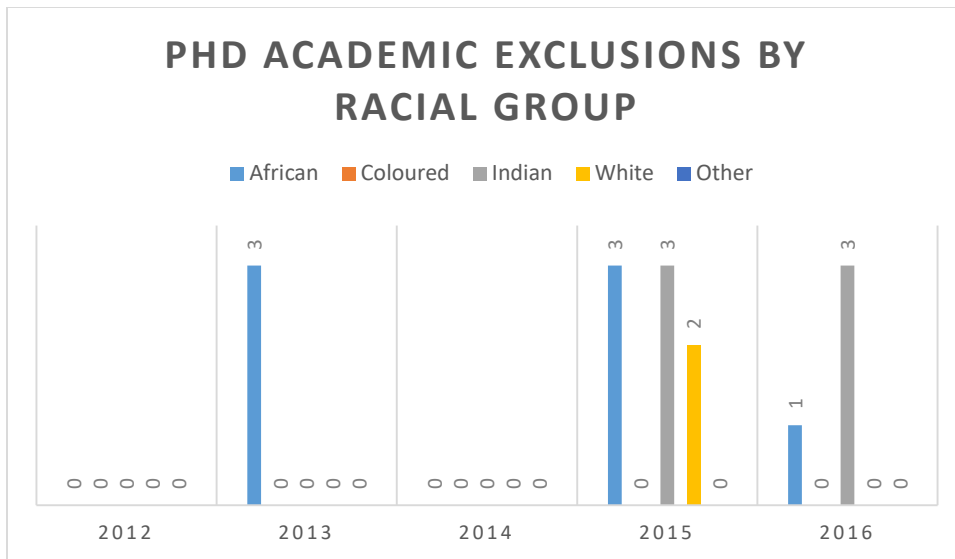


Figure 4-6 PhD academic exclusions by racial group

In Figure 4-6 PhD academic exclusions by racial group are depicted. There has been an increase in African, Indian and white student exclusions. The 2015 and 2016 academic years depicted in the graph illustrates that the same number of Indian students were excluded in both these years and that the highest number of students excluded were Indian.

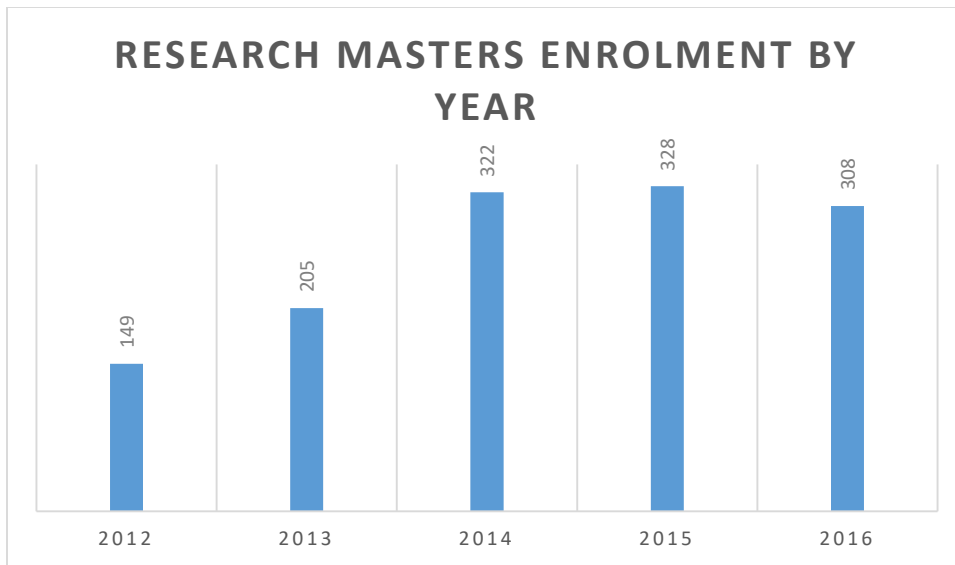


Figure 4-7 Research Masters enrolment by year

In Figure 4-7 the research Masters enrolment per year is depicted. There has been a steady increase in postgraduate students that have embarked on Masters by research. A comparison of the 2012 and 2015 A comparison of the 2012 academic year indicates that the number of research Masters enrolment more than doubled in the 2015 year when compared to that of the 2012 academic year.

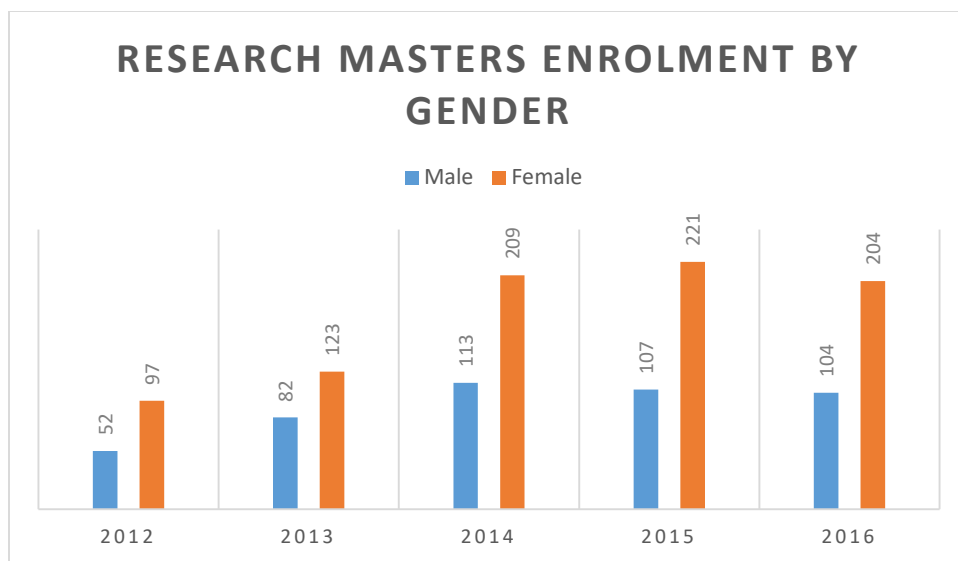


Figure 4-8 Research Masters enrolment by gender

In Figure 4-8 the research Masters enrolment by gender is depicted. There has been a greater number of female students that embarked on the research Masters studies.

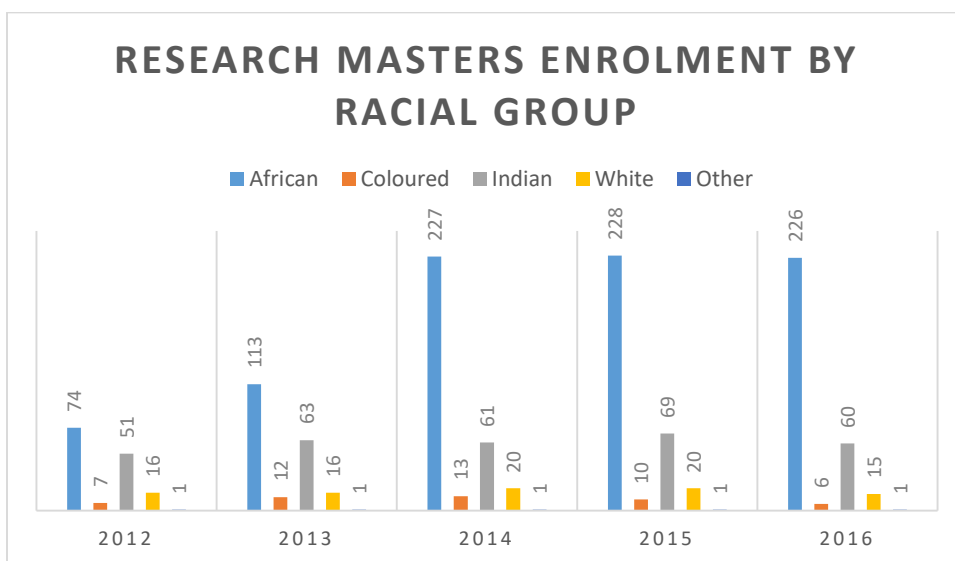


Figure 4-9 Research Masters enrolment by racial group

In Figure 4-9 the research Masters enrolment by racial group is depicted. It clearly depicts an increase of access in the number of African students from 2012 to 2016.

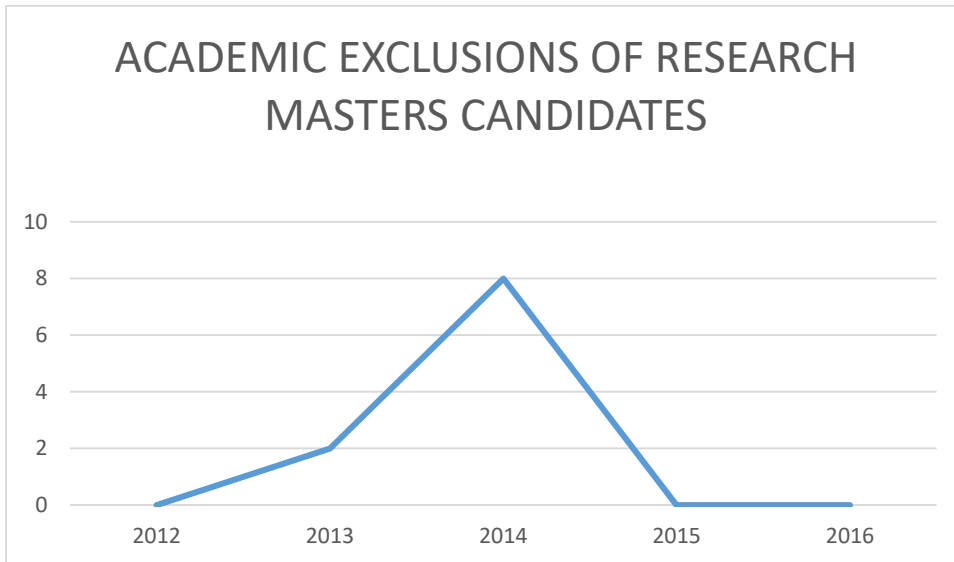


Figure 4-10 Academic exclusions for research Masters students

Figure 4-10 presents the academic exclusions for research Masters candidates. There was an increase in exclusions in 2014.

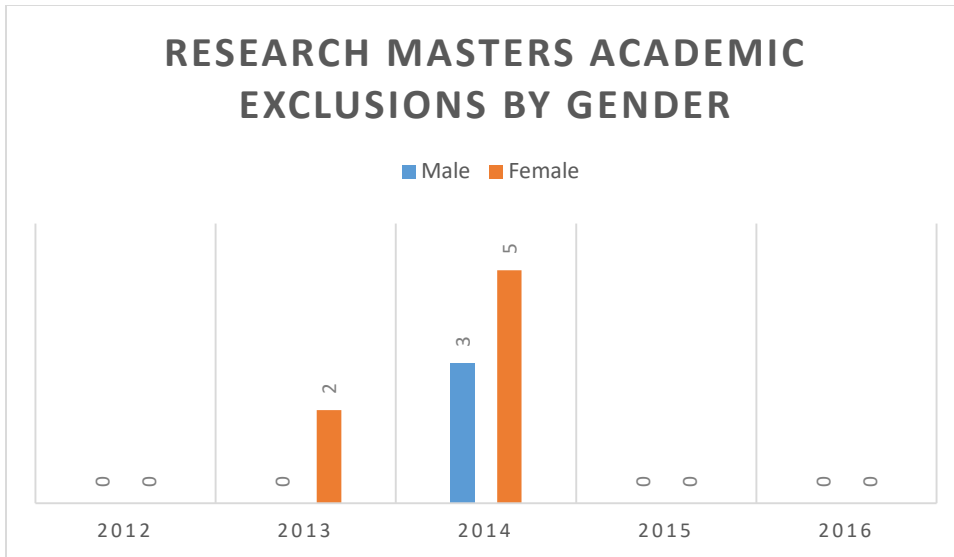


Figure 4-11 Research Masters academic exclusions by gender

Figure 4-11 presents the gender analysis of research Masters academic exclusions.

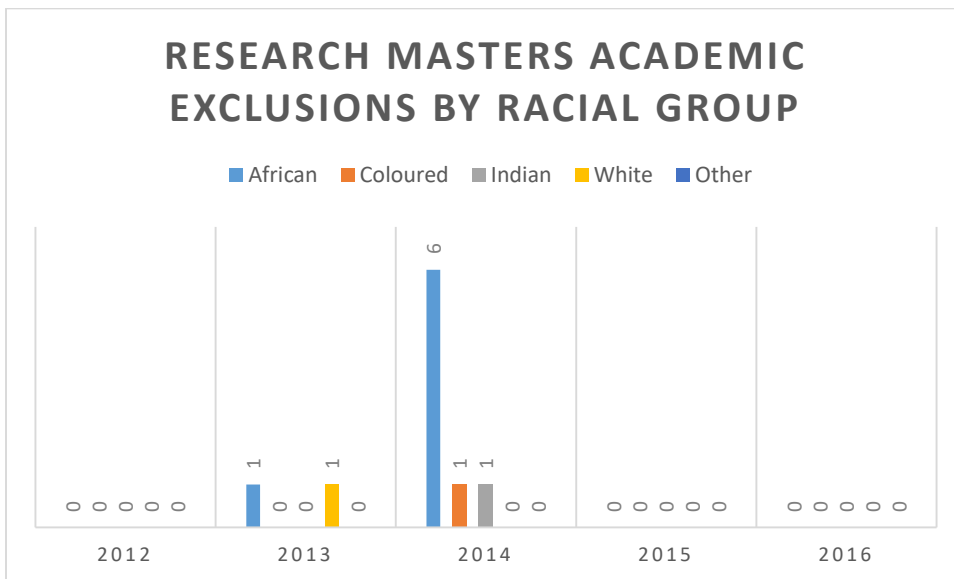


Figure 4-12 Research Masters academic exclusions by racial group

Figure 4-12 illustrates research Masters academic exclusions by racial group. It also depicts an increase in academic exclusion of African students in 2014.

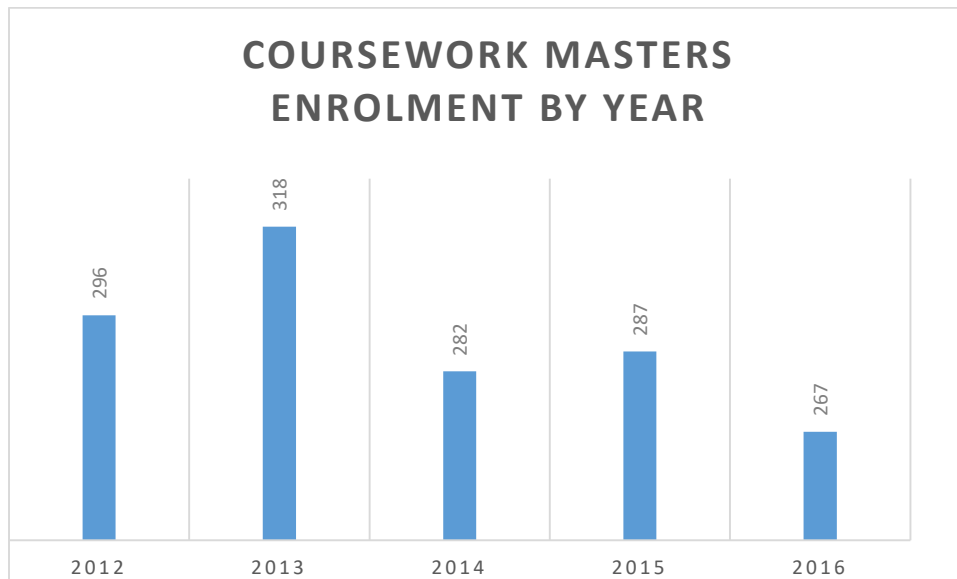


Figure 4-13 Coursework Masters enrolment by year

Figure 4-13 depicts a decrease in coursework Masters between 2012 to 2016.

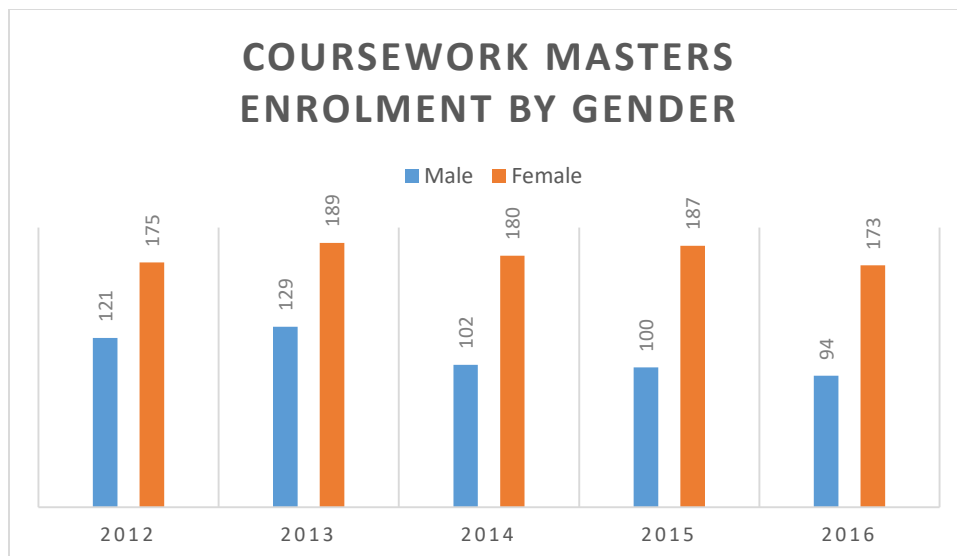


Figure 4-14 Coursework Masters enrolment by gender

Figure 4-14 shows that there has been a constant rise in the proportion of females students amongst those enrolled in coursework Masters studies.

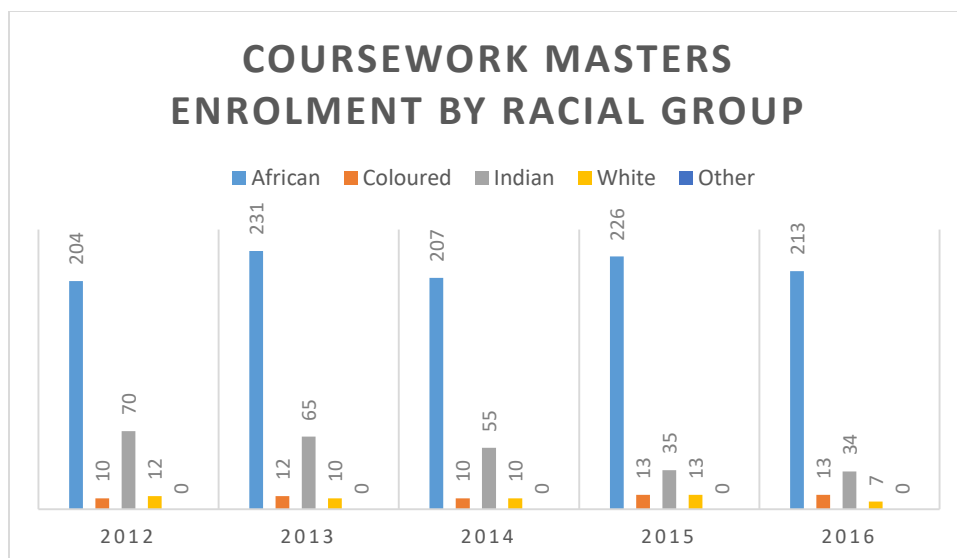


Figure 4-15 Coursework Masters Enrolment by Racial Group

Figure 4-15 presents the enrolment by racial group. There has been an increase in the number of African students that embarked on Coursework Masters studies and a marked decrease in Indian student numbers.

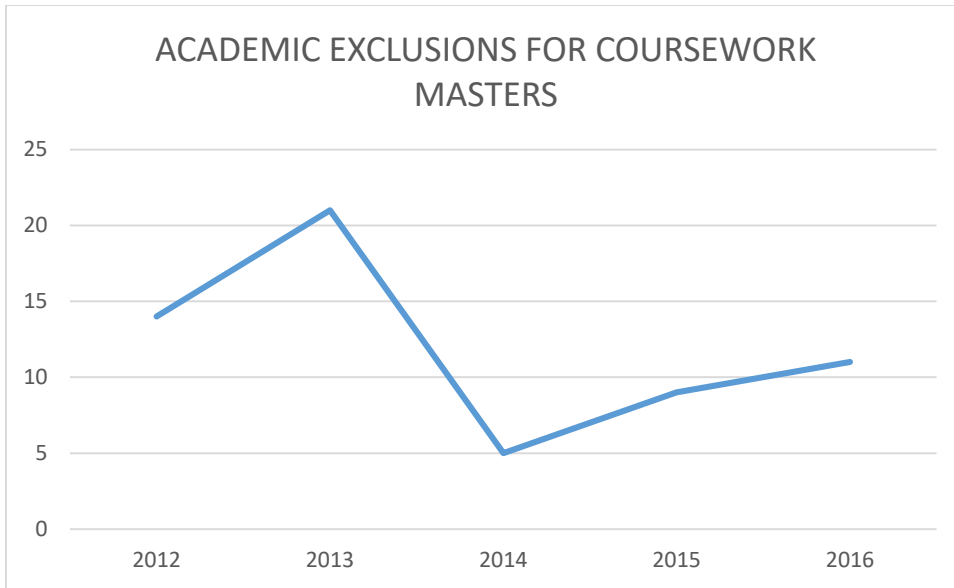


Figure 4-16 Academic exclusions of coursework Masters students

Figure 4-16 illustrates Academic Exclusions for coursework Masters. It also depicts an increase in academic exclusions for coursework Masters in 2013.

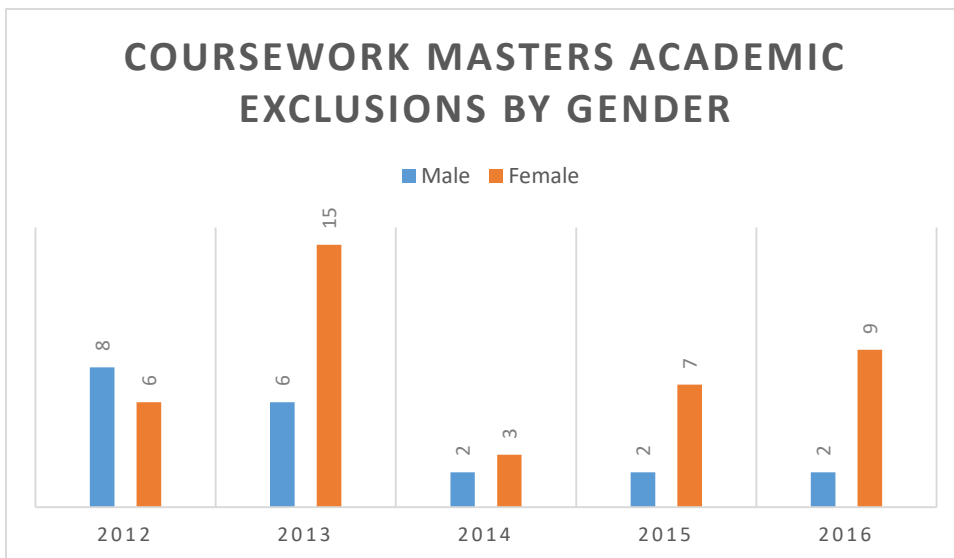


Figure 4-17 Coursework Masters academic exclusions by gender

Figure 4-17 shows that the number of female student exclusions has been greater than that of men from 2013 onwards.

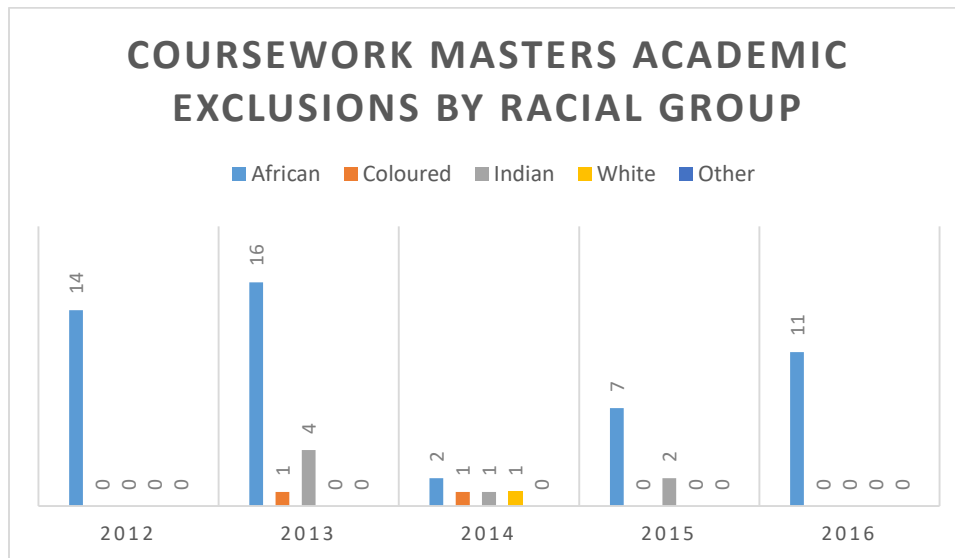


Figure 4-18 Coursework Masters academic exclusions by racial group

Figure 4-18 illustrates the fluctuations in numbers of exclusions over this period, with most exclusions being of African students.

4.3 POSTGRADUATE STUDENTS' UNDERSTANDING OF ACADEMIC EXCLUSION

The purpose of this study is to examine the experience of postgraduate academic exclusions in a university context from a social justice lens. The purpose of this chapter is to dissect participant's responses to open ended questions and to understand their experiences of being academically excluded. The data suggested that participants at the onset of their studies did not consider the implications of academic exclusion. Most

of them believed that they would be able to successfully complete their studies in the stipulated timeframe. The initial processes consumed a considerable amount of time and most of the participants focused on getting their topics approved, preparing for defence and obtaining ethical clearance from the institution for conducting their research, which were at the early stages for them. Several participants become demoralized when they received letters informing them that they had been excluded from the university. Affected participants believed that it was unjust to be issued with letters of exclusion and could not come to terms with being excluded. The immense sacrifices made by the participants resulted in their disillusionment with their study because of their financial, social and family sacrifice.

Academic exclusion is the process by which the university assesses the progress of a student towards the completion of their degree. According to the participants, students are either financially or academically excluded. Financial exclusion takes place when a student cannot afford to pay the stipulated university fees. Higher education is very costly; hence finance is one of the factors that has a great impact in student performance in higher education (Considine & Zappala, 2001). Since higher education is very costly, it means that students without financial support struggle to complete their studies. Students in higher education struggling financially could perform poorly and experience secondary factors such as food security, accommodation, transport and living expenses. This implies that the lack of financial support is closely related to student success in higher education. Academic exclusion takes place when the student exceeds the timeframe for the completion of the degree. Once excluded the student is

offered an opportunity to appeal the decision. The student can be registered again if the appeal is considered and granted.

The student's responses to the understanding of academic exclusion were as follows:

I suppose when we are asked to leave a programme before you actually complete it, you are excluded. There are different ways you can be excluded. Either students are excluded financially because they can't pay for the programme and other students are excluded because they have exceeded the number of semesters they need to study for that particular programme....

[Bona PhD student: Individual interviews]

Academic exclusion can come through emotional challenges when you are emotively destroyed, like in my case, emotionally I was fragmented. Which had a psychological effect on me psychiatrically, because I felt that I was not good enough academically. From the psychological and psychiatric point of view my emotions were tethered. Also academic exclusions come by finances because when you are financially cash strapped and you do not have that support, it can move you back because if you do not register on time you are told that you are not registered. So it's a multiple psychologically, physically and financially.

[Nadia PhD student: Individual interviews]

The participants displayed a good understanding of the meaning of academic exclusion. The participants stated that not being able to pay for the programme resulted in their financial exclusion. Participants were very emotional when they narrated their understanding of exclusion. The participants' understanding of exclusion also revealed the devastating effect of being excluded. The participants realized the extent of sacrifices they made towards their study and they felt helpless, demotivated and demoralised. The exclusion letter can be compared to a gun, which shoots you down and causes a "numbness" in the mind. The only medicine to navigate this "numbness" is a person's self-motivation and self-respect.

4.4 POSTGRADUATE STUDENTS' EXPERIENCES OF ACADEMIC EXCLUSION

The findings of the study indicate that the participants were frustrated after they were notified by the university about their underperformance. The participants mentioned that they had made enormous sacrifices and were disappointed with the lack of sensitivity and compassion they received from the university. One of the participants condemned the university for its failure to explore the reasons for him being unable to perform according to the expectations of the institution. Participants portray the institution as being insensitive and unsympathetic to their plight, which implies that the institution is not supportive to its students.

There are several factors that cause frustration in postgraduate students. One of the factors is the issuing of letters by the institution informing students that they were

underperforming. Receiving this letter aggravated their stress levels and contributed to their frustration. Some students at postgraduate level have a lack of understanding as to how postgraduate studies function and how to effectively navigate the process of achieving success in their studies. Engaging in this field of study can be frustrating, unbearable and an unpleasant experience for some students. These situations could have an impact on some students by lowering their morale and their motivation levels, thus hindering their progress towards their studies. The data implies that the institution needs to establish greater support mechanisms to assist students with the multiple challenges they are confronted with. One of the challenges experienced by students is slow progress warnings, which can lead to academic exclusion.

It can be very frustrating; I will just talk about my own experience. I was busy with my PhD for some time and in 2014 the university sent me a letter saying that I was underperforming and at that time I was busy with my write up and I had some challenges with my supervisor. I understood the university position, but they did not know what I was going through. The university only looked at one aspect, a student x is not performing to our expectation but they don't ask that student why is that the case. It can be a very frustrating thing to students.

[Harry PhD graduate: Individual interviews]

One of our things I was presenting it was part of the student proposal vetting stage and I had chosen at that time to do my PhD by publication and she turned around and she said I couldn't do it because I had not published, then. But she was totally

wrong but because she was the Dean or whatever, she was right but she was totally wrong. And I was so discouraged it took me two years to recover from that. But she was literally wrong. So power is a key thing in excluding people and discouraging...

[Zack PhD graduate: Individual interviews]

My only experience that I understood from the administrators, were on a personal level when they informed me and this is the story. In a more human way we need to be reoriented to submitting a thesis after the final exams are done, as well as the postgraduate results are done. I go to the postgraduate administrators on other business, when they are seeking to find me and inform me. If I haven't they will sit down and say listen there is this issue and try to solve that.

[Bona PhD student: Individual interviews]

Emotionally I feel tethered, my feelings are that you cannot rely on an individual and sometimes you look at that individual and hold them in high esteem, because you hear a lot about them. It's only when you work with somebody and you have these experiences do you realize that other students are not having this, you feel frustrated, you feel rejected, you feel unequal to be on par with peer students in a sense that your work sets you backwards or is inferior. Hence, it makes you feel you have got no value to add to the academic world.

[Nadia PhD student: Individual interviews]

The participant's level of frustration and anger with their experience of academic exclusion highlighted a common thread in this regard. The data suggests that the student's level of frustration and anger can be attributed to a lack of support from the supervisor. The intention of some of the participants was to enrich the community with their knowledge and experience gained from their studies, but some had been disillusioned because they had been made to feel they have no contribution to make to the academic world.

4.5 FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO ACADEMIC EXCLUSIONS

4.5.1 Factors related to supervision support

The findings emerging from supervision support indicates that some of the participants experienced problems with their respective supervisors whilst others interacted and worked well with their supervisors. One of the participants echoed negative sentiments about her supervisor and blamed her supervisor for her academic exclusion. The participants' experiences demonstrated that the lack of academic support resulted in them exceeding the required time frame of their studies and added further to their increased level of frustration. The findings implied that greater support mechanisms were needed to be established to assist students with challenges such as slow progress, so that they could succeed at this demanding level of study.

The root of disagreement and challenges between a supervisor and a student is a lack of communication. The supervisor and the supervisee relationship is one of the pillars on which postgraduate qualifications are built. Also, absence of the supervisor places great strain on the relationship between student and supervisor. The participants' experiences implied that good supervision is pivotal for a student to achieve academic success. Some participants believed that a supervisor is the person who can "make them" or "break them". One of the participants mentioned that she was "jogged along" by her supervisor and she was told that "she was not academic material" approximately eighteen months into her study. The findings implied that poor supervision is one of the causes for students becoming academically excluded from the institution. A student who is told that he/she is not academic material could become demotivated and demoralized and might find it worthless to progress further with their studies.

And having challenges that are unresolved, or unresolved challenges that create further friction results in long periods of academic silence which causes students to get excluded.

[Nadia PhD student: Individual interviews]

Okay, my academic exclusion was such that because for such large intervals I was kept away from my supervisor. I was of the opinion that I was on the right track as I was working and after doing copious and large amounts of work, really giving my heart and soul into it, on meeting with my supervisor we did not touch base. Hence I was pushed back, each time I took two steps ahead I had to go two or three steps

backwards, and this really stalled time to such a limit that I had to ask to be excluded because I overstayed my visit.

[Nadia PhD student: Individual interviews]

But in meeting with my supervisor and having been jogged along and having been providing her with information, there came a point in time within 18 months I got told that I'm not academic material, I'm not good enough, I'm not strong enough, I'm not intelligent enough to embark on this. I was being referred to Masters students to get my work sorted out, which was also very frustrating...

[Nadia PhD student: Individual interviews]

I think supervision to me was a huge challenge, err I don't think Renita is aware of this, for my PhD studies I had four supervisors. The first supervisor left because the university did not renew his contract and then the second supervisor also left because she was going for greener pastures and I worked with her for some time and thereafter she dumped me. And then I got the third supervisor who also did the same thing. And then the last supervisor was the one who made it possible for me...

[Harry PhD graduate: Individual interviews]

The participant's experiences with their supervisors varied. Most of the participants were not satisfied with the nature of supervision received and attributed their failure to complete their studies to poor supervision. A student and supervisor has to maintain a close working relationship. Many students mentioned that they were dissatisfied with their supervisors. They blamed their supervisors for their poor performance and failure to produce good quality research. The data indicated that the students were not satisfied with the support they received from their supervisors because the supervisors failed to provide clear instructions on the work required. Some students were of the opinion that their supervisor lacked the passion and enthusiasm to supervise effectively and often frustrated them because the supervisors were not clear on what they expected. Some participants believed that the supervisor should have continuously provided feedback instead of 'dropping the bomb' after a considerable amount of time had elapsed.

The data suggests that there is a lack of trust between supervisor and supervisee and one of the participants alleged that the supervisor had used her data to further her own academic endeavours, even though the supervisor informed the student that the quality of her work was of an inferior standard. Some participants hold their supervisors responsible for their slow progress in their studies. They describe their supervisors as being negligent, unsupportive and discouraging. In a postgraduate study such as PhD, both the student and the supervisor have to be responsible and the participants mention that they were wronged by their supervisors. One participant mentioned that she could not rely on her supervisor and lost trust in her.

4.5.2 Factors related to cohort supervision programme

The findings of the study indicate that the cohort supervision programme was beneficial to some participants and had negative implications for other participants. Some of the participants mentioned that they had received guidance and support from the cohort system. One of the participants mentioned that the cohort system “broke” him and did nothing to “build” him. He alleged that some individuals “showed off” how “good” they are and impressed that they are “superior” to others. The participants’ experiences illustrated that the cohort system can be beneficial to students and it can also have a demotivating and demoralizing effect on students if wrong messages are communicated and if the system is not managed appropriately. The findings implied that the cohort system is a mechanism to provide support and guidance to students especially if there is a shortage of supervisors. The cohort system is a gathering of academic staff members to offer support to doctoral students. The cohort system was designed to offer peer support to all students that have embarked on postgraduate studies.

At cohort I felt embarrassed, I felt really torn down when mention has been made of me and when my supervisor would walk in and say she has nothing to do with me because I have discussed everything with you. And after I went back from cohort to my supervisor, at cohort I was told you take this and go back and it will come up as a winner. And my supervisor rejected every bit of cohort support.

[Nadia PhD student: Individual interviews]

I don't know if you go to the cohort meetings and see. It breaks you, people showing off how good they are, it does not help to build somebody.

[Zack PhD graduate: Individual interviews]

One thing I must admit that the cohort system and staff members run is a fantastic programme, it's a programme that can really awaken you, I'm totally against the individual research topics because I've been on the cohort system and I realised how much you can grow from other people's studies.

[Amod PhD student: Individual interviews]

The participant's cohort supervision experiences varied. One participant was content with the support received from the cohort supervision. However, two of the participants, who were also a part of the cohort supervision, received poor support there. Most of the participants mentioned that they were unhappy with the cohort supervision because they were not provided with adequate support. Some participants viewed the cohort system as a platform to demonstrate certain individuals' competence and to elevate their capabilities. Instead of lending support they were boastful and wanted to show-off how academically successful they were. These negative experiences from the cohort programme frustrated participants regularly and killed the spirit of being part of the team. Despite being part of the cohort programme, the participants still experienced challenges with regard to their supervision and they were often demotivated and demoralized by certain academic staff members. This displays social injustice towards students because

it is an exercise of power and supremacy of supervisors over their students as well as over their colleagues.

4.5.3 Factors related to social and family challenges

The findings of the study indicate that three of the participants experienced challenges with family that impacted on their studies. Two participants lost a parent. The deaths of their loved ones resulted in emotional strain on both participants. One of the participants mentioned that the death of his father almost brought him to a point of abandoning his study because he could not deal with the emotion of such a huge loss at this juncture of his life. The third participant is a single parent who had experienced even greater challenges. The participant had to manage her home, the needs of the family, work challenges and the challenges of her study. Factors such as anxiety, academic level and time constraints contribute to the stress of doctoral students to achieve their career goals. Although many of the participants had exceeded the timeframe of their study, they feel forced to continue despite the many demanding challenges they experience because they have already made huge sacrifices in terms of family, time and finances.

So being a single female studying, working – I suppose maybe it would have been a different outcome had I been maybe married, having a partner. While studying for my PhD my kids only had so many years coming out of School, so I needed to support them. Struggles with your kids as a single parent, dropping of kids and picking them up in the evening and making sure that everything the home runs

well, while you working at the same time studying. It has not been easy I remember times when I worked and once I reached home I will work until the early hours in the morning. Then I made much more progress in those times...

When you work with undergraduate students even if you put your hours, you can't teach and come in and be able to do your own work later on. In a sense when you teach undergraduate students they just come in at any time and I always feel obliged to assist them.

[Bona PhD student: Individual interviews]

Renita during my PhD studies, I lost my dad in 2010 and I shelved my studies, I put everything aside because I was still dealing with the passing of my old man. And when I got this letter from the Higher Degrees committee, there was a time when I felt like giving it all up, just forgetting about the PhD. That maybe this is not for me. I nearly gave up.

[Harry PhD graduate: Individual interviews]

Human beings are social creatures, who regard family as a central component of their lives. Having to withdraw oneself from interaction with family members is not easy for many individuals and they regard this as an enormous sacrifice. Students have to create a balance between family and the study. Students who cannot accommodate the sacrifice of their family and social space often drop out from postgraduate study. Doctoral students often quit the programme, because they fail to cope with the complexity of the

study. This is a result of more emphasis being placed on family and social commitments. Society views a doctoral degree as a height of academic achievement in the field of education and considers doctoral students to be the best and brightest. Candidates selected for a doctoral programme are subjected to a stringent selection process. There is a large percentage of doctoral students who end up not completing their degree and may drop out each year. The first year of the programme often has a very high dropout rate because many students cannot cope with the extreme stress and social isolation, this demanding level of study brings to their lives.

4.5.4 Factors related to work pressure and responsibilities

The findings of the study indicate that work pressure and responsibilities placed an enormous strain on doctoral students. These factors increase the stress levels of students. Increased stress can affect student's health and academic performance. Students have to maintain a balance between work pressures, responsibilities in their home as well as commitment to their study.

There were three major experiences I have had during the time I have enrolled for my doctoral studies that really made an impact to my academic career. The one was when I was employed at the now TVET College, I was employed at the TVET College and the College had decided to do two major projects that had an impact on the staffing at the College... I moved to UOT (MUT), where I worked for about three years. During that time, I was intensively involved with the universities

planning for the institutional audit...So work was extremely demanding and then in 2011 I was appointed at UKZN and although I moved from a university which was a UOT to a research intensive university, the culture and identity at both institutions were different. So again I had to work extremely hard trying to find my way through what needed to be done. So for four of those years we did not have adequate staffing, we were always carrying extra workload.

[Thara PhD graduate: Individual interviews]

The problems is that postgraduate students they are actually people who are working so they have first employment – people fill those duties first. They can't focus on your studies. Most important things that they got to fulfil their duties at school. Be able to mark, write the reports.

[Bona PhD student: Individual interviews]

And the mentality of the ex-Model C principal had, was that teachers did not need to study, if you had a teaching Diploma that's all you need to be a teacher and she was giving me a lot of frustration.... My principal said you do not need a doctorate to teach. So schools differ, work is a very important place for people to appreciate you.

[Nadia PhD student: Individual interviews]

The findings revealed that some of the participants experienced difficulty in balancing their studies with work relationships. Participants were dissatisfied with their ability to rearrange work with their overall study workload. Their studies engulfed much of their time and most of them spent many hours at night and resumed work the next day, resulting in them having inadequate resting time. One of the participants is a school administrator (also a teacher) and this kind of profession is very stressful. She mentioned the clashes she experienced with her principal which she perceived as a form of 'professional jealousy' because her superior restricted her in every possible way to hinder her progress towards her study. The principal's negative intervention can be viewed as being demotivating and demoralizing to her and a hindrance to her progress in this demanding and advanced stage of study. It also highlights the lack of support and sensitivity from her supervisor towards her personal development.

The findings indicate that the participants had made enormous sacrifices on a personal level. These sacrifices were in the form of weekends, holidays, sleeping time in the evenings, time with their children, spouses, extended family and friends. These sacrifices also result in an overwhelming level of stress and leads to loneliness. Students experience emotional stress in trying to deal with countless responsibilities which makes them vulnerable to "burn out and breaking down".

4.5.5 Factors related to personal and medical issues

The findings of the study indicate that personal and medical issues could affect academic performance. These factors can present challenges, which may affect their achievements. Doctoral studies require commitment, dedication and perseverance. Students need to be focused during this journey. Poor health and personal problems such as taking care of an ill family member can result in higher stress levels.

In terms of my personal family responsibility, my dad took ill. He had motor neuron disorder and over a five-year period his health really deteriorated. And my responsibility was to actually assist with taking care of him during the weekends, so I used to travel to my parents' home which is a 45-minute drive from Durban to where they live and I had to spend from Friday afternoon to Sunday afternoon with him. Taking care of him, feeding him, making sure his comfortable and so on. So for me I think that took quite a strain and I think my emotional state was really affected ...

[Thara PhD graduate: Individual interviews]

In one time I was involved in a bus accident and when that bus capsized with me inside it took time for me to be able to go back to my studies. A person has to first work, get paid and then study afterwards and made some kind of progress afterwards. But there is always time afterwards, after I made some progress, while

trying to complete, some kind of personal issues that crop up, it's at different points in time...

[Bona PhD student: Individual interviews]

I had personal problems I couldn't submit on time especially the last part in this year or towards the end of the year. Well in terms of the load I always give myself a space after the exams. But in 2016 the exams finished very late when I was trying to work on my thesis. At that time my body was so exhausted, I got very sick and I was admitted in hospital over three weeks. So it was a long time that I was hospitalized and I was in the brink of death, that's what the doctor said. So my health became an issue that I had to take care of myself. Even when I was recuperating at home I didn't have the energy actually to go through my studies.

[Bona PhD student: Individual interviews]

Renita during my PhD studies, I lost my dad in 2010 and I shelved my studies, I put everything aside because I was still dealing with the passing of my old man. And when I got this letter from the Higher Degrees committee, there was a time when I felt like giving it all up, just forgetting about the PhD. That maybe this is not for me. I nearly gave up.

[Harry PhD graduate: Individual interviews]

The participants discussed their personal issues and their issues, which varied significantly. The first participant discussed her emotional strain caused by her dad's motor neuron illness... "So for me I think that took quite a strain and I think my emotional state was really affected" The second participant was involved in a bus accident which traumatized and affected her psychologically. She also experienced health problems during her study. Health problems can create additional challenges for a student because a doctoral study is a very intense field of study. The third participant experienced the passing away of his dad, which created an emotional barrier to engage with this study. These factors, which emerged from the data, indicated that personal and medical issues contributed significantly to the participant's challenges disabling them from completing their studies within the required timeframe. The findings of the study revealed that the participant's psychological needs at this stage would be compassion and understanding but instead they were issued letters of academic exclusion, which demoralized and demotivated them. Despite these enormous trials and tribulations, the participants had to navigate through various hindrances they were confronted with.

4.6 POSTGRADUATE STUDENTS' NAVIGATION AND NEGOTIATION OF EXCLUSIONARY ACADEMIC SPACE

4.6.1 Good supervision as a mechanism to navigate academic exclusion

The findings of the study revealed that the participants were generally registered in a study of this nature, if there were supervisors available in the participant's field of interest.

Generally, there are students whose expectations of a supervisor can be unrealistic. Students should be in a position to know what to expect from a supervisor and how to get the help they need. Some students fail to realize that supervisors have limited time because supervisors are generally professors in the first instance and they also teach courses, publish extensively, attend and present at conferences, which implies that they have quite a demanding workload, which makes it difficult for them to parent each student they have to supervise.

I suppose, it's just that the journey of postgraduate studies is much more, in most part but the business between the student and supervisor while they are registered at the earlier stages of the thesis, maybe the supervisor can play a more important role to help the student to push but you can only persuade, you cannot write a thesis for a student... Both my supervisors actually tried to support me. I suppose one of the problems was that I had two supervisors at one stage I was finishing and ready to submit the last chapters, the other supervisor wanted me to rework and go back to the data. It definitely takes time when you have more than one supervisor. Cos you got to satisfy both.

[Bona PhD student: Individual interviews]

Thanks to Prof. L's advice and our pursuance, we were able to manage to get some very rich data, very profound...

[Amod PhD student: Individual interviews]

And I think I explained my strategies to both my supervisors, who were also extremely supportive.

[Thara PhD graduate, Individual interviews]

The data suggested that a lack of support from the supervisor results in a “shift of blame” from themselves onto the supervisor. This “shift of blame” is a psychological navigation tool that students use to compensate for their own inadequacies. Procrastination can be a cause of a student’s inadequacy. The findings of the study implied that three participants mentioned that they received effective supervision and support from their main and co-supervisors. The data further revealed that some of the participants developed a harmonious relationship with their supervisors because they were of the view that a good relationship between them and their supervisor was crucial for their academic success. Students experiencing a problematic relationship or failure to communicate with their supervisor could result in them having to abandon their studies. Most of the participants were of the opinion that good supervision is pivotal to the completion of a successful study.

4.6.2 Family support as a mechanism to navigate academic exclusion

The findings of the study revealed that family support is essential for a doctoral student. A doctoral study demands huge sacrifice in terms of time and this affects family life.

Spouses and family members are required to take on more responsibilities at home. Lack of communication between spouses can create marital problems during the duration of the study.

Family, look my family never gave me any problem per se,... was very supportive.

[Amod PhD student: Individual interviews]

I used to move from this office to Westville campus and work at my husband's office until 11 or 12 at night and he used to sit with me. Those were the extra hours and I just felt like not going home, just helped. He used to go home and attend to the children and come back and sit with me. We had an alarm system and they were able to manage on their own. Most often making time, looking at weekends not committing to extended family commitments and I think it's just being extremely focused, making sure I was able to use every hour in the day. That would maximize the way in which I spent the time.

[Thara PhD graduate: Individual interviews]

One of the participants mentioned that her husband provided her with the much-needed support during her study. Her husband was very understanding and took care of the family. She often studied until late hours at his office and her husband assisted with the children and household chores. At every level, her husband and she worked together and he served as her pillar of strength. Having a supportive spouse reduces the stress factor because the spouse is a valuable enabling member who renders support in several key

areas. Participants did not mention family members' assistance in writing or reading their dissertation, and this maybe an area in which family members with a strong academic background could have rendered assistance.

4.6.3 Sacrifice and hard work as a mechanism to navigate academic exclusion

The findings indicated that the intense nature of the PhD study resulted in a poor quality of life for the doctoral student. Many graduate students have families and other responsibilities to contend with. A balance has to be achieved with the demanding fields of study and a student's personal life. Many students find it difficult to maintain a perfect balance resulting in them sacrificing other aspects of their personal life.

With a heavy workload I still managed to prioritize my studies, I spent weekends here. I'd be here from Friday until Sunday late. So I had to push harder. Yeah, that's what I did. I had to change my work habits and focus on finishing it. I'm happy that I had a supervisor like Prof Chichalo. He really pushed me to get to where I am today.

[Harry PhD graduate: Individual interviews]

The findings indicated that some participants had to deal with their heavy workloads and juggling their studies. In order to prioritize their studies, the participants sacrificed their weekends, worked late nights at spouse's offices and did not engage with family commitments in order to drive this academic process further. These sacrifices affected

the quality of life of participants and could also lead to other marital problems such as divorce and so forth.

4.6.4 Peer and social support as a mechanism to navigate academic exclusion

The findings suggested that peer and social support eliminates the loneliness in a doctoral student's study life. Peer and social support assists doctoral students with ideas and views that can be useful in their study.

Another one would be to find a group of people who will just write together, those that are writing their exams. I think I have done much more progress during those times.

[Bona PhD student: Individual interviews]

So the factors I employed was I elicited the help of a total new person from another campus and who has completed his PhD. And he has told me that my work is not inferior, it's my alignment, I've got shoddy alignment because when I made corrections at one point I did not correct another – the inconsistencies of that. And he helped me to now start re-framing... Now that I have created a new one... she's overwhelmed and very thrilled. She says it's very good work. So my supervisor was prepared to go with 20% material and it's my helper, I'm going to call this person my 'helper', my helper has reshaped and reconfigured, re-tapered it to become academically smart. It's my own initiative.

[Nadia PhD student: Individual interviews]

One participant mentioned the benefit she received as a result of shared knowledge resulting from a learning group. This results in fostering the acquisition of knowledge and skills that bridged the academic and social divide. Another participant mentioned her relationship with a peer resulting in mutual interdependence, trust and feelings of belonging amid peers. This relationship demonstrated peer mentoring which affords students with similar experiences an opportunity to understand and successfully navigate their own experiences. It is important for participants to carefully select people they can work with in order to make peer support effective.

4.6.5 Professional work as a mechanism to navigate academic exclusion

The findings indicated that doctoral studies draw professionally-based students who study part-time. Foreign students prefer full-time studies. Part-time students find it difficult to cope in the two streams, that is, in their academic stream and their professional workload.

I think the only thing I could have done was resign from my job and be a full time student. And then to use my studies and consider future careers prospects.

[Thara PhD graduate: Individual interviews]

Work commitments presents a tremendous challenge on postgraduate students. All participants in this study were full-time employees, employed professionals in the field of education, and majority of them were married. The data indicated that participants required the PhD for their professional development and some of them actually considered resigning from their current portfolios to become full-time students and reconsider their career prospects after completing their studies. Students pursue a PhD for varied reasons and one of the main reason for attaining a PhD is to join the world of academia. Participants were forced to find ways to navigate through the PhD programme because achieving a PhD is a dream for most students.

4.7 CONCLUSION

The data affirmed that doctoral studies present students with many challenges. Students who cannot deal with the challenges end up frustrated, lonely and stressed. The challenges experienced varied considerably amongst the participants. Some participants experienced a combination of challenges, such as, challenges with their supervisors, financial challenges, family challenges, heavy workloads at work, lack of support from family, employers and the institution itself.

Participants also had different reasons for wanting to embark on a study of this nature; some of them were motivated to achieve the status of “doctor”, whilst others sought financial rewards. Some of the participants wanted to pursue this field due to their love for education and others for their professional development. There were also participants

who favored the cohort system while others that were opposed to and criticized the cohort programme.

The participants also displayed different personal attributes such as intelligence, personality and levels of intrinsic motivation. They differed in their ability to manage and cope with stress. Despite the divergence in this vast array of variables, some participants were committed to the course and found ways to navigate through the obstacles presented to them. All the participants exceeded the timeframe of the study. One of the main reason why doctoral students exceed their timeframe is due to their procrastinating with their study. The various sacrifices such as family, friends, time and money induced a psychological stimulation that resulted in them navigating through the challenges and enduring the obstacles encountered.

CHAPTER FIVE

5 CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This study aimed to examine the geographies of postgraduate academic exclusion at a South African university. The study was based on the narratives of six students (the participants), at a South African university. The purpose of the study was to examine the experiences of academically excluded postgraduate students. The objective of the study was to develop an understanding of students' experiences of postgraduate academic exclusion through the use of semi-structured individual interviews. The study was motivated by the high percentage of students who became academically excluded each year.

The study was informed by the following key research questions:

1. What stories do postgraduate students tell about their experiences of academic exclusions in one school within the University of KwaZulu-Natal?
2. What are the factors that contribute to academic exclusions in one school within the University of KwaZulu-Natal?
3. How do postgraduate students navigate and negotiate academic exclusions in this context?

5.2 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

5.2.1 Stories participants told about their academic exclusion experiences

The summary of the main findings of the study indicated that:

Most of the participants were academically excluded because they made slow progress towards their study and could not complete within the stipulated time. Students understanding of postgraduate academic exclusion differed amongst the participants. Student's responses to the understanding of academic exclusion revealed that the participants had a good understanding of the meaning of academic exclusion.

The participants experienced negative communication at various levels. For instance, the academic exclusion letters they received from the institution impacted them negatively by reducing their morale. Most of the participants mentioned how they were affected emotionally when they received letters of academic exclusion from the university. Some of the participants felt that the supervisors lacked the skills and expertise to supervise effectively. They also felt that the supervisors were insensitive to their needs.

5.2.2 Contextual factors that affect academic exclusion

The findings of the study affirmed that social/personal factors and institutional factors were the main factors that contributed to the participant's academic exclusion.

5.2.2.1 Social/Personal factors

The findings of the study indicated that a lack of support systems, either formal or informal, affected some of the participant's lack of persistence towards their study. Success in a doctoral study requires support from certain individuals capable of rendering support, such as a friend, a spouse or parent. The findings of the study revealed that some participants received support from family and loved ones, which affirmed that support is crucial for students engaged in this field of study. Furthermore, two participants were affected by the loss of loved ones, which impacted their study progress. The findings of the study revealed that some of the candidate's personal health issues also impacted the progress of their studies.

5.2.2.2 Institutional factors

The findings of the study affirmed that various institutional factors contributed to participant's academic exclusion. Most of the participants were pleased with being in a cohort system, which provided them with the guidance and "scaffolding" they required. The findings also revealed that the cohort system provided most of the participants with peer support and social integration opportunities, which created a sense of

belongingness, which contributed to their persistence. Some of the participants were not satisfied with the cohort system and mentioned that some academics boasted about their abilities, which had left the students feeling demoralized which detracted from the purpose of teamwork and belongingness.

The findings of the study indicated that some supervisors did not provide the students with timeous feedback of their progress towards their study. The failure of the supervisor to provide them with timeous feedback resulted in their frustration and disillusionment after they were served with academic exclusion letters. The study indicated that participants who received academic exclusion letters believed that had the institution informed them on their progress earlier; it would have prepared them to exercise various interventions to prevent themselves from being academically excluded.

5.2.3 How students negotiate and navigate academic exclusion

Despite the participants being served with letters of academic exclusion, participants did not abandon their study altogether and some of the participants worked at developing a harmonious relationship with their supervisor in order to achieve academic success. The findings of the study revealed that the participants had a strong sense of motivation. Three of the participants had eventually, successfully completed their degree. The study thus affirmed such students' resilience to persevere and graduate with the doctoral

degree despite the challenges such as sacrificing family and friends, dealing with death and illness and challenges with writing their dissertation.

5.3 THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL REFLECTIONS

5.3.1 Theoretical reflections

The study was informed by Children's Geographies and New Sociology of Childhood Studies as its theoretical framework. The environment (work, home, institutional) presented challenges to the participants. The participants had to navigate these challenges and their endurance and perseverance led some participants to achieve academic success. The participants were diverse in terms of gender, age, race, intellectual ability, socio-economic class and their backgrounds were different. This framework assisted the researcher to explore and interpret the narratives of the participants in a higher educational context.

5.3.2 Methodological reflections

The study embraced a qualitative research approach because the research concentrated predominantly on the experiences of participants based on their narratives. Qualitative research enabled the researcher to obtain rich data from a small number of participants

(Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007) and is an 'inquiry' process of understanding that explores a social or human problem (Cresswell, 2008, p.1). This approach makes use of a structured interview schedule and the open-endedness of the questions enabled the researcher to ask in-depth probing questions to extract rich data that were used to answer the key research questions, such as the student's experiences of postgraduate academic exclusion at the School of Education. The qualitative approach has given me as the researcher the opportunity to listen to the voices of the participants having being excluded at some point of their studies.

Individual interviews were conducted with six students who were the participants of the study. The participants were sampled through the process of purposive sampling. Three male and three female participants were selected. The sample only included PhD students, four of whom were academic staff members. The data was arranged according to themes to derive meaning from the collected data and generate findings according to categories and themes (Cohen et al., 2013).

5.4 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The main limitations of the study were as follows:

- The study is limited by its dependence on the participants at one University in KwaZulu-Natal, which restricts the inquiry to the data provided.

- Exclusion and experiences is a sensitive issue and not something, students would freely talk or participate about. The narratives of students yielded sufficient data in order to understand postgraduate students' experiences of academic exclusion. It was difficult to source students who were willing to participate and share their experiences of exclusion in this particular study. Some students, who volunteered to participate initially, withdrew from the study because they were not comfortable to share their experiences thus making it challenging for the researcher who had to make arrangements to solicit other participants who would voluntarily participate in the study.
- The sensitive nature of the issue made it difficult for participants to narrate their exclusionary experiences and became emotional during their participation.
- The study focused on the stories of the participants and does not examine the experiences of the supervisors. It would be interesting to analyse the narratives of supervisors in an alternate study.
- The study focused on the exclusionary experiences of doctoral students who were very persistent to earn their degree at this level and who gave up too much to quit at this stage despite having received exclusionary letters from the institution. The researcher could not access students who quit at the early stages of their study because they had already exited.

5.5 IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

5.5.1 Implications for policy and practice

The findings, which emerged from this study, underpin the preceding research because significant studies have been undertaken with the intention of improving institutional structures. In view of this, the purpose of this study was to explore the implications and to provide recommendations for students, institutions, supervisors and other stakeholders currently engaged in the doctoral route. The main factors, which affected the participants with their study, were sacrifices in terms of finance, family, and social life, for example, and them also having to deal with intervening life experiences, work commitments, family commitments and other factors, which had implications for them during their doctoral study.

- The challenges, which doctoral students experience, are not overwhelming. Students need to have a clear notion of the laborious journey and develop a plan of action to acclimatize to the sacrifices, challenges and perseverance to successfully complete their study.
- Personal motivations, for example, wanting to earn the degree, can provide a compelling reason to persist and a student needs to identify factors, which can motivate them to persist, for example, gaining new skills and knowledge or receiving incentives such as a promotion at work.

- At the institutional level, structures can be developed to improve the support rendered to doctoral students. Institutions need to revise the way in which they communicate to students and address any form of negative communication to students. School staff members, for example, can improve the productivity of doctoral students by behaving in a manner, which prevents confrontational relationships.
- The professional development of supervisors is essential to improve the relationship between supervisors and students.
- Participants did not make mention of the effect of course work being provided to them prior to them commencing with their dissertation. The reason why some of the participants struggled with their dissertation is because of a lack of doctoral course work available to them, which could have equipped them in being better prepared for writing their dissertation because they would have acquired essential research and writing skills. The university should revisit the curriculum and explore how coursework can be incorporated in a doctoral study.
- Supervisors should continuously be trained to improve their supervisory skills. Supervisors should have adequate skills for the area of supervision they have been selected to supervise.
- The supervisor should provide timeous communication to students about their progress on their study. Timeous communication could reduce the frustration experienced by students and create a perception of commitment and support from the supervisor, which impacts students psychologically because this is what they expect at this level of study. Students do not want to be isolated in this journey.

- The university needs to examine the workloads of a supervisor carefully and ensure that each supervisor is allocated a fair and equitable workload. An increased workload could also reduce the passion and enthusiasm of the supervisors.
- Allocating co-supervisors to doctoral students presents challenges for students because the expectations of both the main and co-supervisor could be different. These differing expectations creates confusion for the student and leads to frustration often results in students getting “lost in the woods”, for example, a students work could be accepted by main supervisor and rejected by the co-supervisor.

5.5.2 Implications for further research

This study mainly focused on academically excluded postgraduate student’s experiences. The supervisors of these students should be interviewed to narrate their experiences with academically excluded students as a part of future research. This study had certain constraints in terms of the time allocation and available financial resources. A more intensive study with researchers collaborating with each other, allocation of more financial resources and time might shed greater illumination on this research area. The Masters and undergraduate level is much larger in terms of enrolment and a study could be conducted in those programmes to ascertain whether the findings bear any similarity to those findings that emerged at the doctoral level.

5.6 CONCLUSION

With the high number of students failing to complete their studies timeously at the university, it is important for all stakeholders to understand the factors resulting in such exclusions. The study highlights the challenges and sacrifices made by doctoral students and the support they need to persist in their studies. Stakeholders such as the institution, supervisors, cohorts, family and friends need to support the academic endeavors of doctoral students. At the institutional level, institutions should consider ways to accommodate these students academically, economically and integrate them socially into the institution and academic programme.

This qualitative study examined postgraduate academically excluded students' experiences at a South African university and provided students with the opportunity to share their experiences of academic exclusion. It is envisaged that this particular study would contribute towards a greater understanding of postgraduate academic exclusion based on the experiences of the academically excluded participants. The use of narrative inquiry adopted through individual interviews has enabled the unpacking of participant's voices with respect to their experiences of the dynamics within the higher education institution, and their persistence to navigate the exclusionary dynamics in this higher educational context in a South African university.

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Appendix 1: Request for permission to conduct research at the School of Education

School of Education
University of KwaZulu-Natal
Edgewood Campus
P. Bag X03
Ashwood 3605. Durban
14 March 2016

The Dean
School of Education
University of KwaZulu-Natal
Edgewood Campus
P. Bag X03
Ashwood 3605. Durban

Dear Sir/Madam

Re: Request for permission to conduct research at your school

We are student and staff members in the School of Education, University of KwaZulu-Natal. We plan to undertake a study titled: "Geographies of Postgraduate Academic Exclusions at a South African university: A Narrative Inquiry."

We hereby request your permission to conduct a study at the Edgewood Campus. The participants in the study will be postgraduate students from your school. They will be required to participate in individual interviews that are expected to last between 90-120 minutes in one session. We also request to collect data by the processing of documentation which we hope will produce rich data and contribute to the study.

Please note that

- The school and participants will not receive material gains for participation in this research project.
- The students will be expected to respond to each question in a manner that will reflect their own personal opinion.
- The school and the participant's identities will not be divulged under any circumstance.
- All student responses will be treated with strict confidentiality.

- Pseudonyms will be used (real names of the participants and the institution will not be used throughout the research process).
- Participation is voluntary, and therefore, participants will be free to withdraw at any time without negative or undesirable consequences to them.
- The participants will not, under any circumstances, be forced to disclose what they do not want to reveal.
- Audio-recording of interviews will only be done if the permission of the participant is obtained.
- Data will be stored in a locked cupboard at the University for a maximum period of five years, thereafter it will be destroyed.

I thank you.

Yours sincerely

Renita Maharaj (Student)
Tel: 084 2355551
031 2628731
maharajra@ukzn.ac.za

Professor Pholoho Morojele
Tel: 071 0410352
031 2603234
Morojele@ukzn.ac.za

CONSENT FORM:

If permission is granted to conduct the research at your school, please fill in and sign the form below.

I,, (Full Name) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project. I hereby grant permission for the researcher to conduct the research project at the_____ campus. I understand that learners are free to withdraw from the project at any time, should they so desire.

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: ____/____/____

R. Maharaj

Tel: 084 2355551

031 2628731

Email: maharajra@ukzn.ac.za

Mr Premlall Mohun

Tel: 031 2604557

Email: mohunp@ukzn.ac.za

Appendix 2: Request to conduct research at Edgewood Campus

Unit 2, 11 Nugget Road
Reservoir Hills
4091

Office of the Registrar
UKZN
Admin Block 128
Westville campus

Dear Mr Simon Mokoena

RE: Request to conduct research at Edgewood Campus

My name is Renita Maharaj, currently studying the MEd in the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Edgewood campus. My student number is 214585390.

I hereby request to conduct a research project within the Edgewood Campus. My research topic:
Geographies of Postgraduate Academic Exclusions at a South African university: A Narrative Inquiry.

This research will mainly be focusing on academically excluded postgraduate students at Edgewood Campus; they will be interviewed to generate data. All the ethical issues will be considered when conducting this research.

Yours Sincerely

.....

Renita Maharaj

.....

Registrar, University of KwaZulu Natal

.....

Date

Appendix 3: Request for participation in a research project

School of Education

University of KwaZulu-Natal

Edgewood Campus

P. Bag X03

Ashwood 3605. Durban

30 August 2013

Dear student

Re: Request for your participation in a research project

It was good to meet you on _____ date. As we told you in our meeting, we are staff members in the School of Education, University of KwaZulu-Natal. We would like to do a study called, "Geographies of Postgraduate Academic Exclusions at a South African university: A Narrative Inquiry."

We kindly ask your permission to participate in this research. The participants in the study will be students from the school. We value what you think about your studies and how you are experiencing your studies. You will be required to allow us to interview you individually. The interviews will be approximately 30-45 minutes. We will meet in one session that is convenient for you.

Please note that

- The school and students will not receive material gains for participation in this research project.
- You will be expected to respond to each question in a manner that will reflect your own personal opinion.
- The school or your identities will not be divulged under any circumstance.
- All student responses will be treated with strict confidentiality.
- Pseudonyms will be used (your real name and the name of the school will not be used throughout the research process).
- Participation is voluntary, and therefore, you will be free to withdraw at any time without negative or undesirable consequences.
- You will not, under any circumstances, be forced to disclose what you do not want to tell us.
- Audio-recording of interviews will only be done if you give us permission.
- Data will be stored in a locked cupboard at the University for a maximum period of five years, thereafter it will be destroyed.

I thank you.

Yours sincerely

Mrs R. Maharaj

Tel: 084 2355551

031 2628731

Email: maharajra@ukzn.ac.za

Professor Pholoho Morojele

Tel: 071 0410352

031 2603234

Morojele@ukzn.ac.za

Appendix 4: Research Questions

Individual Interviews

Research Question 1

What stories do postgraduate PhD students tell about their experiences of academic exclusions in one school within the University of KwaZulu-Natal?

- Please tell me what you regard academic exclusion to mean?
- Who are the students that are involved or affected by academic exclusions?
- Please tell me any story about what happened in your life related to academic exclusion?
- In your own words please provide examples of academic exclusion in people involved and reasons for that etc.?

Research Question 2

What are the factors that contribute to academic exclusions in one school within the University of KwaZulu-Natal exclusions in one South African?

- Please tell me a story about how you experienced academic exclusion?
- In your story please explain how you came to know about this?
- What was your initial reaction?
- Please explain did you have anyone to discuss this with? Please elaborate.
- Explain more about your feelings and emotions?
- Were there reasons stated for the academic exclusion?
- Were you surprised to hear about this? Explain why?
- How else could this process be better managed?
- Please narrate a story about what you think contributed to your academic exclusion?
- Besides what you mentioned above, what else do you think could have happened that would prevent you from being academically excluded?
- What do you consider as reasons for students being academically excluded? Please give specific examples related to your experience.
- What role do you think the following could play to reduce chances of students being academically excluded a) University, b) family, c) work and d) personal issues etc.?

Research Question 3

How do postgraduate PhD students navigate and negotiate the varied and complex spaces and places of academic exclusions in this context?

- Please explain what you did to avoid being academically excluded?
- What were the opportunities afforded to you?
- What were the strategies employed to overcome factors that contributed to academic exclusion? Let's consider each factor mentioned.

Appendix 5 : Document analysis schedule

The document analysis methods of data collection were designed to elucidate data on the following demographics:

- 1) The enrolment number per year
- 2) The enrolment number by gender
- 3) The enrolment number by racial group
- 4) Academic exclusion by year
- 5) Academic exclusion by gender
- 6) Academic exclusion by racial group

Appendix 6: Ethical Clearance



20 May 2016

Mrs Renita Maharaj (SN 214505390)
School of Education
College of Humanities
Edgewood Campus
UKZN
Email: maharajra@ukzn.ac.za

Dear Mrs Maharaj

RE: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

Gatekeeper's permission is hereby granted for you to conduct research at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN), towards your postgraduate studies, provided Ethical clearance has been obtained. We note the title of your research project is:

"Geographies of Postgraduate Academic Exclusions at a South African University: A Narrative Inquiry"

It is noted that you will be constituting your sample by conducting interviews with postgraduate students on the Edgewood Campus.

Please ensure that the following appears on your questionnaire/attached to your notice:

- Ethical clearance number;
- Research title and details of the research, the researcher and the supervisor;
- Consent form is attached to the notice/questionnaire and to be signed by user before he/she fills in questionnaire;
- gatekeepers approval by the Registrar.

Data collected must be treated with due confidentiality and anonymity.

Yours sincerely

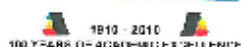

MR SS MOKOENA
REGISTRAR






Office of the Registrar

Postal Address: Private Bag X64001, Durban, South Africa

Telephone: +27 (0) 31 260 8005/2206 Facsimile: +27 (0) 31 260 7624/2204 Email: registrar@ukzn.ac.za

Website: www.ukzn.ac.za



Founding Campuses:  Edgewood  Howard College  Madlala School  Pietermaritzburg  Westville

Interview with Nadia - Transcript

R: Okay. Good morning, I am Renita Maharaj and I am a student at UKZN, I'm currently studying towards my Master of Education (Social Justice) degree. The purpose of my study is to examine the Geographies of postgraduate academic exclusion at a South African University: A Narrative enquiry. Please be advised that you are free to exit this interview at any stage. We will maintain confidentiality throughout the process and you will be given a pseudonym Are you ready to begin?

N: Yes I am

R: Thank you

N: Good morning Mrs Maharaj. My name is Nadia and I am a student who has pursued my PhD through UKZN but with lots of trials and tribulations I am at the end of my journey. I'm proud to say that I can now be of benefit of your studies.

R: Thank you. First question, please tell me what you regard academic exclusion to mean?

N: Academic exclusion, if you look at it literally you are excluded from continuing your academic journey but to me it means that I have not fulfilled my academic requirements henceforth it required me to stall or to pause.

R: Thank you. Who are the students that are involved or affected by academic exclusion?

N: Err from my perspective and with my interaction with many, they are students who cannot touch base with their supervisors and there seems to be an incoherency or staccato effect from your supervisor. And having challenges that are unresolved, or unresolved challenges that create further friction results in long periods of academic silence which causes students to get excluded.

R: Thank you. Please tell me any story about what happened in your life related to academic exclusion?

N: Okay, my academic exclusion was such that because for such large intervals I was kept away from my supervisor. I was of the opinion that I was on the right track as I was working and after doing copious and large amounts of work, really giving my heart and soul into it, on meeting with my supervisor we did not touch base. Hence I was pushed back, each time I took two steps ahead I had to go two or three steps backwards, and this really stalled time to such a limit that I had to ask to be excluded because I overstayed my visit.

R: Okay, In your own words please provide examples of academic exclusion in people involved and reasons for that etc.

N: Academic exclusion can be simply from a physical point, could be health issues that creates a person to become inconsistent in their thinking. And their health does not allow them to engage in academic work. Academic exclusion can come through emotional challenges when you are emotively destroyed, like in my case, emotionally I was fragmented. Which had a psychological effect on me psychiatrically, because I felt that I was not good enough academically. From the psychological and psychiatric point of view my emotions were tethered. And I felt that was my point where I my axle had really loosened and my wheels gave way. Also academic exclusions come by finances because when you are financially cash strapped and you do not have that support, it can move you back because if you do not register on time you are told that you are not registered. Financially if you do not have the amount of money required to and fro, you know travelling journey from here to the University, single drive is R110.00. It's R220.00 a trip. So for me who was not meeting with my supervisor and my supervisor who stood me up at least 40% of my exclusive time being excluded, also incurred me lots of costs and frustration. So it's a multiple psychologically, physically and financially.

R: Thank you, Please tell me a story about how you experienced academic exclusion?

N: Err, my academic exclusion actually if I tell you the story it may seem very funny. But it seemed to me that in my first year I was academically excluded. Because after having being confirmed with my proposal which was by the person who really interviewed me, that told me how important this study was going to be for UKZN. It boosted my morale to try and finish as soon as possible so that I could make a difference to the academic world. But in meeting with my supervisor and having been jogged along and having been providing her with information, there came a point in time within 18 months I got told that I'm not academic material, I'm not good enough, I'm not strong enough, I'm not intelligent enough to embark on this. I was being referred to Masters students to get my work sorted out, which was also very frustrating. I let that be, my exclusion when I was told that I was not good enough to do this I tried to floor cross to other supervisors. But my supervisor continued to keep me on, and by her keeping me on gave me the impression that I was strong but just not meeting her requirements and I tried very hard at many stages to blend with her. And she kept on telling me that I am too weak I'm not going to pass you. When I really wanted to find headway and move on she said you are a short distance away from there and I will make it happen for you. Hence I did not change my supervisor but the Academic Head in the sense of the Chancellor was well aware that somebody wanted to take me on and had a serious conflict with my supervisor. He chose not to take me on because he did not have professional interactive debates. My exclusion came at a point when my supervisor after many, many months of absence came to me and told me that my work was not good enough and then she gave me this notice that it's five years elapsed and you will have to stop studying. And she even claimed I could go to another University, one of our sister Universities that's got inferior work, I could go to that University and my type of work/study would be passed with Cum Laude because I had a Cum Laude on my Master's degree. She thought that if I go to the sister University I could see Cum Laude hence that is the way I felt excluded but I told her that I was going to write up and ask for an appeal and so I did. I was granted my extension. And glad to say that I have engaged myself in my own private supervisor who is helping me present my work to my so called "intimidatory supervisor. And now that the work is coming out and she

knows that I am paying through my nose for this kind of help she is foregoing it and she has told me that latter in this year there is a graduation and she can see me walk down the stage. And also what alarms me with this exclusion is, my supervisor who was so unsupportive of me all this time, gives me the impression that a supervisor likes somebody else to do their work and she is going to sit with the glory of producing a PhD student with somebody else helping me. And no work of my PhD would have been by my supervisor from UKZN. Because the person I'm working with is not even in the Education field, he is from a total different arena. This helper is just helping me to get academic writing in place. It's my work with a different person's help.

R: Alright. In your story please explain how you came to know about the academic exclusion?

N: It came through a person in the administrative office, she sent me a note saying that this is a page you have to fill in and send it to me by tomorrow morning. And because I hadn't opened my mail, I got a message from my supervisor that you have been excluded and then I asked her and she said don't you read your mail? When I opened up my mail I read through it and I googled it and found out that I can appeal. And I downloaded the appeal form on my own, I wrote up my appeal, lot on the appeal because it was too little a line. I wrote my own letter, I succinctly put it into twelve lines, my extensive explanation was attached to the appeal document and e-mailed it. It took two weeks for the hearing to take place and I was given an e-mail notification that my appeal was successful and I can continue.

R: What was your initial reaction?

N: I wasn't surprised but I was very disappointed at the same time. Because knowing that I had a supervisor who was a fundi in the field and whoever else I met told me that you so lucky, I thought I was really lucky. But when this came up I realized that I was short changed and I didn't expect the supervisor to feel good about me being excluded. Also she was not prepared to work at an accelerated pace with me. She still

continued to stagger and work, and leaving me in isolation, and leaving me in the cold all the time. Err knowing that my timeframes were short I had to engage in finding my own help. And after finding my own help, I've come to realize that this could be a professional clash between me and my supervisor, which I'm not going to keep as baggage, bar me from continuing to study. I will pursue but definitely not with this supervisor I am going to graduate under.

R: Okay, Please explain did you have anyone to discuss this with? Please elaborate.

N: I have engaged with other academia from UKZN and they were extremely supportive, extremely helpful. They told me things about me, which means they know a lot. And they knew that whenever I presented my stuff at cohort I was sincere, I did my homework and they could see the quality of what I was producing was something different and I was going to make a difference. But what they were alarmed about was how come this was not moving ahead. When I started cohort a group of kids that I started with, the type of work that they were producing and the type of work I was producing, mine was not par excellent but it was ahead of them all the way. And only when it comes to the crunch or the presentation, the moving on I felt staggered. These lecturers at University gave me scaffolding actually not supervision to enable me to feel good and they asked me never to give up. But they refused to take me on as their student. Because of professional clashes they could endure. Like I said I wanted to move on, I wanted to change supervisors, my supervisor had a problem.

R: Okay. Explain more about your feelings and emotions?

N: Emotionally I feel tethered, my feelings are that you cannot rely on an individual and sometimes you look at that individual and hold them in high esteem, because you hear a lot about them. You seem to think this is it, you want to be like your supervisor who has accomplished, and written so many and accomplished so many milestones at University. That being under her I felt that I would have nothing to turn back on, but my

feelings are now that you cannot trust an individual. It's only when you work with somebody and you have these experiences do you realize that other students are not having this, you feel frustrated, you feel rejected, you feel unequal to be on par with peer students in a sense that your work sets you backwards or is inferior. Hence it makes you feel you have got no value to add to the academic world.

R: Thank you, where there reasons stated for the academic exclusion?

N: The reason stated was that my supervisor was too scared of me after two attempts of me having my work edited by recognized editors from UKZN, in the name of very recognized people. Err according to my supervisor I was ready for going for graduation to submit by a particular time. Err then my supervisor said your work is not of the correct standard, it's very poor material and I know you are going to go and fail. This work is going to fail and once you fail you will never be able to complete your PhD ever again. So I am not prepared to send a student that failed under my name. So you rather be excluded, she wanted me out of UKZN and she wanted me to go, she named two Universities that would have taken me overnight.

R: Where you surprised to hear about this? Explain why?

N: Err I was not surprised, surprised would be putting it, I will be lying. I was aware of this because I could feel if ever I needed to talk to my supervisor telephonically, she would say we have to meet. And she adopted a co-supervisor who had not initially taken me on. The supervisor was promoted to another University and I was working entirely with a supervisor. But I was told that this particular co-supervisor required more students who at PhD level so I need to work with this supervisor at another campus of UKZN. And both of them dealt with me the first day, called me in to work with a particular chapter of my work that needed fine tuning. But when I got to the campus we did nothing of that sort. We did everything else but sorting that chapter out. And then the next visit I got called my both of them, I was sat down and I was given a very warm treatment and I

was given a beverage to drink. And then I got told to leave and I need to go because I'm not good enough for this campus.

R: How else could this process be better managed?

N: I think this process could have been better managed right at the outset, whatever work I wrote about, I feel if it was a chapter 1 we were talking about, if a supervisor can sit with each student, even if three meetings just discuss what's going to happen in chapter 1. And reach a finality on that, together taped and all my discussions had been taped by my supervisor. And if you sit there and clarify this on media, I mean with your recording. Then you write the chapter then it will be much more beneficial than working in pockets and then you writing something and then it's to and fro, to and fro. And then you move on to chapter 2 without 1 being sorted out. I think that is where a lot of dilemma and frustration sets in. Because clarity is not sought, finality is not sought. And it's to me in my journey I have been working in isolated pockets. It's like coming here, going there, go and do chapter 4 while chapter 3 has not been completed. And I think if each chapter is dealt with, finished off and most of the time that you get to your supervisor and your supervisor is discussing other students things and then says sorry I thought I was working with that student. So your supervisor is not in par with what you did. And when you are working on one paradigm and she is talking about another. And then frustration sets in between you and her. Then she says I haven't read that and I thought you were doing this. So I don't know you tell me what you are going to do. So when I tell her I was told go and write that and you write that and after six weeks you are told that is not good enough. So I think when a supervisor has too many students to man, it's also probably on the supervisor's part it's unfair. So supervisor's should have a set amount of students and they must work with a realistically set amount. Because when your ambitions are too great and you are looking at for self-endearment of yourself, at the expense of your students, it's really not fair, it's really not unbecoming of an individual to use the student as her ladder to reach the sky.

R: Please narrate a story about what you think contributed to your academic exclusion?

N: I really don't know what contributed I was never told, all I was told that I did not meet the number of years.

R: Besides what you mentioned above, what else do you think could have happened that would prevent you from being academically excluded?

N: I was constantly invited for cohorts which I attended but after attending cohort and interacting with many academics that gave me some support. At cohort I felt embarrassed, I felt really torn down when mention has been made of me and when my supervisor would walk in and say she has nothing to do with me because I have discussed everything with you. And after I went back from cohort to my supervisor, at cohort I was told you take this and go back and it will come up as a winner. And my supervisor rejected every bit of cohort support. So telling me that cohort could help me and going back to her, cohort was not helping and my hard weekend away from my family was wasted because what I did on Saturday and Sunday and I come back on Tuesday to present was all null and void. So there was no link between my supervisor and the cohort. Although she was a part of the cohort. She did not agree with other personnel giving criticism or correcting. She felt it was only her way or the freeway.

R: What do you consider as reasons for students being academically excluded? Please give specific examples related to your experience.

N: I think academic exclusion from my point of view, the bullets lie with your supervisor, the aim is the gun, I'm the aim and she has the bullets to shoot you down. She can either shoot you or choose not to. And when she has made up her mind that I was not good enough material, nothing could change her. Everything I presented to her, never seemed to be right. But superficially, verbally she was very happy with me. But when it came to the crunch of producing the goods or the fruits. In so far as picking of the fruit from the tree, I was left to rot. So I feel if your supervisor does not play the game, if your supervisor does not angle you to go in the direction as success you can be withheld.

R: What role do you think the following could play to reduce chances of students being academically excluded
a) University, b) family, c) work and d) personal issues etc.?

N: Let's go with the University, my belief and without you having come to me, know that once I walk down the aisle and get myself graduated I was going to write this letter to the University and tell them a student who is not getting recognition after one year with their lecturer. Our supervisor should have a supervisory meeting and students that register for PhD it's an accolade for the campus, for UKZN internationally. After one year there should be a recheck, as to why is there a stalling, how far is the student. We should have a graph system at the University to see why is student 1, that's me who still is on dot and hasn't moved 1 step up and then they should have a support structure for supervisors. To rotate, to change, to call me in at year 1, to give me counselling, give me support and tell me listen we can see at a very early stage besides your supervisor you are not good. Then you know it's two people telling you something. Here nobody has come, except my co-supervisor came in my fourth year. I met my co-supervisor in my fourth year, the year I got excluded. That was the fourth year ninth month. So three months after I met him I got excluded. So my point is I think the University mismanages supervisors in a sense that they give the supervisor, maybe the supervisor is academically astute and it was taken for granted that this person can produce the goods. But if the butter is not evenly spread, the bread will not taste the same, different students get different corners of the bread. Maybe I was the crumbs.

R: Family?

N: Family, in the sense that time taken that you cannot put a price tag on. And family support – I didn't have a family issue but I had a financial issue. Family is also when your husband gets frustrated because you are going to campus and coming out with nothing. You are going to A campus, lecturer has made an appointment

on A campus and you are calling you back to B campus and putting his work on hold. I mean it doesn't mean if I do not drive I should be short changed putting his work on hold. Nothing says that I must drive, there is no rule. And also where family gets involved where they taking you to a destination and you are going nowhere. It frustrates them as well. Because when you come back and discuss your roles or your day and you get told this and that, also makes the family feel that you are wasting your time in this whole journey. So family also needs to know that I'm correct because they have not met my supervisor and are witnessing it from my point of view. So we have our own animosities, you know it can be a one sided thing. Emotionally I am being disturbed so it does wipe off on your family. When you are not meeting your targets you seem to be on edge with everybody.

R: Work?

N: Work, This is a very interesting one and this needs to be recording in your data like I think work comes first before the University. Because the feelings, I have been placed in a very favorable position to be placed in an ex-Model C School. That functioned with every media and all resources it's state of the art. And the mentality of the ex-Model C principal had, was that teachers did not need to study, if you had a teaching Diploma that's all you need to be a teacher and she was giving me a lot of frustration which I have spoken to my supervisor at great lengths about the frustration. My principal said you do not need a doctorate to teach. She was also getting private people to get into my computer to see if I was using school time to do my University work. And as a manager on the plant and I listened to something on cohort and I presented to my teachers, because it was about teachers work and teaching and at University if good articles if I passed, I was given a warning letter. That I must not try to wipe off my study skills onto teachers that not necessarily in this day and time, if a person wants to read anything they must download their own. My principal also came back and told me whenever I needed to go to anything that was outside school hours, she did not allow me, she rejected me. Secondly, being kind as I was I told her that on Friday afternoon I need to leave as soon as

school closes I have an appointment with my supervisor, those particular days she will set aside something where the meeting cannot go ahead without me. I had to cancel my appointments, I had to be late for my appointments and as a result my principal and I locked heads and it was a racial clash. She started victimizing me, so much so that I had to be taken to another School. According to the Department I went for a hearing and I expressed my discontentment with my principal, my academic clash, my professional clash and I explained to the Department that studying caused me to have a lot of dissention with my principal. Therefore I'm now re-placed in another school whereby the academic work that I am doing I share with my staff. So schools differ, work is a very important place for people to appreciate you.

R: Personal issues?

N: Personal issues, you feel like a failure because you not moving ahead. Personally you feel, you talk to people, you tell them information. They are intrigued by what you are doing, they asking you where are you going. But there is your supervisor that's diluting you and giving you 1% of her 100% concentration and you can't go and let your supervisor or institute down. So you feel you living in two worlds. You having a multiple identity – identity crisis personally cos you cannot share all your emotions with people because you just give them the candy of the pill. The coating of the pill not the true effects of it.

R: Okay, thank you. Please explain what you did to avoid being academically excluded?

N: I wrote a report to the University and I said to them that I have had this multiple challenges financially, not moving ahead, I've given the reasons I had a double death, I was hospitalized, twice I was hospitalized for long intervals and it has avoided me to be thinking coherently, consistently so much so my work has become of inferior standards that I could not move on.

R: What were the opportunities afforded to you?

N: The University was very fair, they allowed me to re-register. And I was given a person to liaise with and henceforth I'm working from there. And now I can see myself at the end of the tunnel, the light is there. At the end of the tunnel.

R: What were the strategies employed to overcome factors that contributed to academic exclusion? Let's consider each factor mentioned

N: The factors and strategies I employed, it was never my supervisor it was my own thoughts whereby I continued after asking her my exclusion, after the letter of exclusion. I still went back to my supervisor and I was still giving her new chapters, new turnout and she was still rejecting it. So the factors I employed was I elicited the help of a total new person from another campus and who has completed his PhD. And he has told me that my work is not inferior, it's my alignment, I've got shoddy alignment because when I made corrections at one point I did not correct another – the inconsistencies of that. And he helped me to now start re-framing. And also when he started reading through my work, he said you've got a very strong proposal. But your proposal and your thesis seem to be, proportionally it's not in percentage. So what I had a strong motivation was only 20% meted out in the thesis. Well now we working towards putting 100% proposal into my thesis. And I have presented that to my supervisor which I'm sad to say when I presented this before my supervisor ticked it off and sent it for printing and was ready to submit. Now that I have created a new one she's overwhelmed and very thrilled. She says it's very good work. So my supervisor was prepared to go with 20% material and it's my helper, I'm going to call this person my 'helper', my helper has reshaped and reconfigured, re-tapered it to be become academically smart. It's my own initiative.

R: Thank you so much for that.

